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MYTHS AND CONSEQUENCES:
ALLEN TATE'S
AND
SOME OTHER VANDERBILT TRADITIONALISTS'
IMAGES OF CLASS AND RACE
IN THE OLD SOUTH

By
Anne Ward Amacher

A dissertation in the Department of American Civilization
submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts
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University

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PREFACE

In the picture of the Old South given in the works of Allen Tate and some other Vanderbilt Agrarians (or Traditionalists), the writer of this dissertation has found a good deal that is misleading or even untrue. She has also found in their attitudes toward the Old South certain social and moral assumptions with which she cannot, as a liberal, agree. Both the factual errors and the bad assumptions may have had, and may continue to have, evil consequences, she believes, in the thinking of the Vanderbilt Agrarians and their admirers. Discovering early in her research that Richard M. Weaver's book Ideas Have Consequences¹ was, if not a clearly proved consequence, then at least an ally of the kind of thinking current in works such as Tate's and Lytle's in the late 1920's and early 1930's, she decided to call this dissertation "Myths and Consequences." As an illustration of the anti-liberal implications of some Vanderbilt Agrarian thought, she has quoted from the works of Weaver, who has been a kind of defender and disciple of certain Vanderbilt

¹Richard M. Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences (Chicago, 1948).

Agrarians and who has exemplified in his own thought possible consequences of adherence to social principles like Tate's.²

Two other prefatory statements remain to be made. First, the writer of this dissertation wishes to thank her adviser, Professor Oscar Cargill, as well as other professors in the Graduate School of Arts and Science of New York University, for suggestions and criticism. Second, she acknowledges, with thanks, permission which she has been granted to quote from the writings of the Vanderbilt Agrarians and others. Those to whom she is indebted for such permissions include the following: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., for permission to quote from At the Moon's Inn, by Andrew Lytle, Copyright © 1941, used by special permission of the publishers; the

²Richard M. Weaver's exposure to Vanderbilt Agrarian thought was facilitated by his taking his M. A. degree at Vanderbilt University (1934) and his Ph.D. (1943) at Louisiana State University (Robert Penn Warren's address between 1934 and 1942). Weaver's doctoral dissertation was entitled "The Confederate States, 1865-1910: A Study in the Survival of a Mind and Culture." Just before, and during, Allen Tate's editorship of the Sewanee Review, Weaver published in that magazine the following articles: "The Older Religiousness in the South," Sewanee Review, LI (Spring, 1943), 237-249; "Albert Taylor Bledsoe," Sewanee Review, LII (Winter, 1944), 34-45; "Southern Chivalry and Total War," Sewanee Review, LIII (Spring, 1945), 267-278. The general spirit of these three articles by Weaver is in harmony with Tate's convictions about the Old South. Articles evidencing Weaver's admiration of particular parts of the thought of Tate and other Vanderbilt Agrarians include the following: Richard M. Weaver, "Agrarianism in Exile," Sewanee Review, LVIII (Autumn, 1950), 586-606; Richard M. Weaver, "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Hopkins Review, V (Summer, 1952), 5-21; Richard M. Weaver, "The Tennessee Agrarians," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 3-10.

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³ G. P. Putnam's Sons now holds the copyrights on the books by Andrew Lytle and Allen Tate which were originally published by Minton, Balch and Company.

poem "The Screen," published in The Fugitive, June-July, 1923;
Robert Penn Warren for permission to quote from his biography
John Brown: The Making of a Martyr and from his poem Brother
to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices.

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CHAPTER I
PURPOSE AND SCOPE
OF THE
DISSERTATION

I. SOME CRITICS OF THE VANDERBILT AGRARIANS (OR TRADITIONALISTS)

The social ideas of Allen Tate and the group sometimes known as the Vanderbilt Agrarians have often been dismissed as the ridiculous sentimentalism of intellectuals in Happy Farmers' clothing. The element of sheer fantasy in the agrarian aspect of their thought was exposed quite early by skillful (though not always disinterested) critics. The Nation's review of the Agrarian manifesto I'll Take My Stand pointed out the foolishness of the Agrarians' implication that this country's large population could be satisfactorily supported by an economy which severely curtailed the trend toward industrialism and tried to promote life on the farm for many more of the people.¹ Mr. William S. Knickerbocker, an avowed friend of some of the Agrarians, commented on the "economic romanticism" of the volume I'll Take My Stand.² Even the Old Southerners, whom the Vanderbilt writers cited for doctrine and example, were not, Knickerbocker declared, so inordinately agrarian in their

¹ Henry Hazlitt, "So Did King Canute" [review of I'll Take My Stand, by Twelve Southerners], Nation, CXXXII (January 14, 1931), 48-49. See Twelve Southerners, I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition (New York, 1930).

² William S. Knickerbocker, "Back to the Hand" [review of I'll Take My Stand, by Twelve Southerners], Saturday Review of Literature, VII (December 20, 1930), 468.

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thought as was Mr. John Crowe Ransom, who had written the "Introduction" and the first essay in I'll Take My Stand.⁵

Well-founded as these critics' remarks may have been, attacks focussed upon the specifically agrarian element in the Vanderbilt writers' thought may have diverted attention from what is perhaps a more significant aspect of the thought of some Vanderbilt Agrarians. For reasons which we shall hope to make clear in this dissertation, it may be less desirable that the Agrarians' praise of life on the farm should be subjected to ridicule than that this other element in their thought should be critically examined. This other element is interwoven with their agrarianism and seems, indeed, to be a motive force behind the agrarianism of some of the group. The element to which we refer is the frequent yearning of some Vanderbilt Agrarians for the virtues of a "stable" society—that is, a society in which great numbers of people, satisfied to follow the economic, social, and educational pattern of their own parents, stay in their places and act the roles marked out for them by tradition, inherited folkways, or the habits of the class into which they are born. Whether we agree or disagree with the Agrarians that farming should occupy a much more important place in our society than it does at present, we should look closely at their ideas on social stability. We should scrutinize the social thinkers and political leaders

⁵ William S. Knickerbocker, "Mr. Ransom and the Old South," Sewanee Review, XXIX (Spring, 1931), 222-239. See [John Crowe Ransom], "Introduction: A Statement of Principles," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. ix-xx; John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in ibid., pp. 1-27.

whom they have approved or disapproved in past societies. We should examine the social structures and social ideas which, according to the Agrarians, have helped to make a moral economic life possible in the past. And we should ask ourselves whether such social structures and ideas can be called "democratic"--and why, if they cannot be called democratic, certain Agrarians should have undertaken to defend them.

A few critics have already raised the question as to whether the social ideas of the Vanderbilt Agrarians are democratic. These critics, who have suggested that undemocratic assumptions lie behind the writings of some Vanderbilt Agrarians, may be divided into two groups: (1) those who see the Agrarian men of letters in relation to a far-reaching European and American reaction against liberal democracy and (2) those who (like the writer of this dissertation) direct their attention primarily upon the Southern characteristics of the Agrarians.

Representatives of the first of these two groups discuss the Vanderbilt Agrarians' literary criticism as part of a wider movement often called the "New Criticism." The most scathing attack of this sort is probably Robert Gorham Davis's article "The New Criticism and Democratic Tradition."⁴ Explicitly or by implication including in his indictment such Vanderbilt Agrarian-New Critics as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Andrew N. Lytle, Davis linked the undemocratic tone

⁴ Robert Gorham Davis, "The New Criticism and Democratic Tradition," American Scholar, XIX (Winter, 1949-1950), 9-19.

of the New Criticism with the assumptions and terminology of nineteenth-century Catholic reactionary thought--specifically the thought of Joseph de Maistre.⁵

Less scathing but more penetrating than Davis's article is another piece which also places the Southern Agrarian New Critics within the framework of the New Criticism as a whole. Bernard Baum's "Corpus Delicti: Some Letters Mainly Concerned with the New Criticism"⁶ is a series of imaginary epistles from a professor at Proteus College, Windebago, Minnesota, to a friend in Germany. The effect of the piece--one must read the letters to believe this--is both satiric and tragic. By considering the possibility that the Southern branch of the New Critics may be grouped with the English branch and by presenting the emphatically religious and royalist T. S. Eliot as the patron saint of the New Critics, Baum suggested the supra-Southern and

⁵ Ibid., pp. 9ff. In a round-table discussion--the sequel to Davis's article--Allen Tate volunteered the information that he had never read a word of Joseph de Maistre's work. For Tate's statement, "It happens that I have never read a word of de Maistre," see the round-table discussion by William Barrett et al., entitled "American Scholar Forum: The New Criticism" in the American Scholar, XX (Winter, 1950-1951), 92. Tate did not point out that he had read and acknowledged, some years before, his indebtedness to The American Heresy, a book by Christopher Hollis, published in London in 1927, and that Hollis remarked in the course of The American Heresy that de Maistre's ideas were possessed of an almost sacred profundity and permanence. See p. 90 of Hollis's The American Heresy for Hollis's tribute to de Maistre. See p. 303 of Allen Tate's Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall (New York, 1929), for Tate's acknowledgment of indebtedness to Christopher Hollis's point of view.

⁶ Bernard Baum, "Corpus Delicti: Some Letters Mainly Concerned with the New Criticism," South Atlantic Quarterly, LI (April, 1952), 261-275.

ultimately religious sanctions for the aristocratic tendencies in their work.⁷

There can be no doubt that Allen Tate's vision of the Old South is strongly influenced by his devotion to an essentially European tradition--a tradition exalting European society and religion before the Reformation and disparaging modern society. Even the most provincial study of Tate's Old Southernism must inevitably allude to some European writers or American expatriates (such as T. S. Eliot) whose thoughts on medieval religion, monarchy, feudalism, aristocracy, peasantry, finance-capitalism, or political democracy illuminate Tate's view of the Old South. Indeed, an approach to Tate's vision of Old Southern social ideas is almost necessarily bifocal. We cannot help noticing that Tate's interest in certain European religious and social ideas colors his image of the Old South: if we are to understand Tate's pictures of Thomas Jefferson and John C. Calhoun or his glimpses of the Promised Land toward which (Tate says) the best instincts of the Old South yearned, we must be aware of certain images behind Tate's picture of the Old South--images compounded of such ingredients as pre-Reformation

⁷ Ibid., pp. 271-272. Baum apparently considers the royalist tendency and the aristocratic tendency to be spiritually akin to each other. It should be pointed out that Allen Tate, like Christopher Hollis, thinks that "royalty and aristocracy are fundamentally opposed systems of rule." See Allen Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry: Selected Essays, 1928-1948 (New York, 1948), pp. 274-275; and Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 48. See also Chapter III of this dissertation for a further discussion of Tate's ideas on monarchy.

Christianity, feudalism, Christian monarchy, and a stable peasantry. (These images, most of which look back to medieval society and theology, we shall examine briefly in the latter portion of Chapter II of this dissertation.) But a Southerner may prefer to concentrate upon the Old Southern, rather than the theological or European, content of an undemocratic, or only semi-democratic, body of thought. For one thing, a Southerner may be more familiar with the South than with the deity admired by Mr. Tate or his conservative brethren in Europe--or with the society which Tate admires in England and France before the fourteenth century. For another thing, a native of the South may well be concerned with how the Old Southern tradition defined by Tate and other Vanderbilt Agrarians may be related to the most distinctive feature of the South's social structure--its bi-racial pattern, past and present. A liberal Southerner may be chiefly disturbed, not by the Agrarians' social conservatism in general, but by the way in which Tate, in company with some of the other Agrarians, has rummaged through the remains of Old Southern thought and society for materials in which to clothe his conservative instincts. Such a liberal Southerner may fear that of the Old Southern images and ideas rediscovered or refurbished by Tate and his friends, the ones most likely to be influential today are those which rationalize the Old Southern reluctance to grant the Negro anything but a rigidly defined place in the social structure. In confirmation of his fear, such a liberal Southerner may note that Tate and Andrew Nelson Lytle (whose social

philosophy closely resembles Tate's) have not dissociated their yearning for a stable society (based, they say, on the personal ownership and control of small productive properties by a sizable proportion of the people)⁸ from their admiration of the slave-owning planter whose personal ownership and control of his labor sometimes seem to Tate and Lytle preferable to the relation between capital and labor, or landlord and tenant, in present-day society.⁹ In further confirmation of his fear, the liberal Southerner may note a curious inconsistency in Frank Lawrence Owsley, the well-known professional historian, who is a member of the Vanderbilt Agrarian group: Owsley often sounds quite democratic when he is speaking of the yeoman or subsistence farmer of the Old South,¹⁰ but when his subject is the Negro in the South, his democracy sometimes forsakes him.¹¹

The second group of critics who have noted undemocratic tendencies in some of the Vanderbilt Agrarians--that is, the group of critics who have stressed the Old Southern background of these Agrarians' thought--includes some writers who have not

⁸ See, for example, Allen Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence, ed. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (Boston, 1936), pp. 80-93; Andrew N. Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in ibid., pp. 237-250.

⁹ See pp. 149 and 216-223 of this dissertation.

¹⁰ See pp. 279-283 and 287-288 of this dissertation. Herman Clarence Nixon, a contributor to I'll Take My Stand and at present the managing editor of the Vanderbilt University Press, has managed to extract and use the democratic element in the studies of the Owsley school of historians. Nixon, the only important Vanderbilt Agrarian whom the writer of the present dissertation does not criticize severely, has repudiated most of the undemocratic elements which are implicit in I'll Take My Stand and some other Agrarian writings. See H. [erman] C. [larence] Nixon, Lower Piedmont Country (New York, 1946), p. 20; and Herman Clarence Nixon, Forty Acres and Steel Mules (Chapel Hill, 1938), pp. 9-10.

¹¹ See pp. 125-126, 230, 288-289, 442n, 450, and 455 of this dissertation. But see also p. 142 of ibid.

had the space to document their charges fully. Among these writers the most important is John Lincoln Stewart, some of whose findings we shall note from time to time. In so far as space permitted it in his dissertation, Stewart did call attention to some Agrarians' inclination toward a society of clearly defined racial and social classes. He also emphasized the role of the plantation legend and the legend of the New South in precipitating the social thought of the Agrarians. But because he analyzed the agrarian, religious, aesthetic, and anti-scientific elements in a large number of the Vanderbilt writers' works, he did not have the opportunity to investigate fully their vision of racial and social classes in the Old South nor did he analyze their images of such figures as Jefferson and Calhoun.¹²

The most intransigent attack I have seen on the alleged Southern aristocratic snobbery of Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, and Andrew Nelson Lytle appeared in the Commonweal. The author, Oliver W. Evans, called his attack a "literary post-mortem" on the Fugitive poets.¹³ (The Fugitive poets were a group, the original and important members of which were faculty members or students at Vanderbilt University during all or a part of the period from 1920 to 1925.

¹² John Lincoln Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1946.

¹³ Oliver W. Evans, "The Fugitives: A Literary Post-Mortem," Commonweal, XL (June 30, 1944), 250-254.

They met to read and discuss poetry; and between April, 1922, and December, 1925, they published The Fugitive--the magazine of poetry from which they acquired their name.)¹⁴ Without giving any genealogical documentation, Evans stated that the "early Fugitives" (e.g., Ransom, Davidson, and Tate) came from the "'old families' of the middle South."¹⁵ Nashville, at the moment it furnished the setting for the Fugitive group, Evans presented as "clinging desperately and a little pathetically to its aristocratic traditions of a feudalistic Southland."¹⁶ Whereas John Lincoln Stewart (who supported his contention more responsibly than did Evans) saw Ransom's (and to some extent the other Fugitive-Agrarians') resentment of industrialism as springing from a philosophically and aesthetically grounded "fury against abstraction,"¹⁷ Evans presented the Fugitives' anti-industrialism as a by-product of their dislike of the "new class [which was] . . . rising [as a result of industrialism], a class whose criterion of prestige was no longer family, but money."¹⁸ This new class threatened to displace the old families

¹⁴ The most convenient brief histories of the Fugitive group are the following: Charles Allen, "The Fugitive," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLIII (October, 1944), 382-389; Allen Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 75-84.

¹⁵ The "early Fugitives" were, Evans maintained, descended from "well-to-do Southern families" who had acquired libraries in colonial times--libraries which had been "added to little by little by subsequent generations." Evans, "The Fugitives: A Literary Post-Mortem," Commonweal, XL (June 30, 1944), 251.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," p. 458.

¹⁸ Evans, "The Fugitives: A Literary Post-Mortem," Commonweal, XL (June 30, 1944), 251.

from which, according to Evans, the Fugitives came. The Fugitives, said Evans (and one imagines he meant to extend his remark to some of the Fugitives after they became Agrarians), were "seeking in sociology for a system which could afford them the security and prestige for which they yearned."¹⁹

That behind the system of sociology adopted by Tate and his "cohorts" lay images of an aristocratic Old South is one point of an article by Charles I. Glicksberg. But Glicksberg erroneously attributed to Tate a simple and coherent vision of the Old South. Ignoring Tate's articles published in 1925 and 1935 on the inhospitality of the Old Southern aristocrat to belles-lettres,²⁰ Glicksberg assumed that Tate had consistently eulogized the Old South for its "cultured class, composed largely of plantation owners, [who] could devote themselves with impeccable taste to the enjoyment of books, arts, the drama, and the social graces."²¹ Glicksberg must have remembered momentarily a stereotyped image of the planter which he had encountered elsewhere, for sensitivity to fine literature of the ante-bellum

¹⁹ Ibid. Evans, like Bernard Baum, whose article is cited on p. 5 of this dissertation, called attention to similarities between T. S. Eliot's and the Fugitives' thought. (Again, one assumes Evans includes the Agrarians who had formerly been Fugitives). Both Eliot and the Fugitives, Evans maintained, were "dissatisfied with the present, looked with undisguised contempt upon the working man, and longed nostalgically for an aristocratic past." Ibid., p. 252.

²⁰ C.[harles] I. Glicksberg, "Allen Tate and Mother Earth," Sewanee Review, XLV (Summer, 1937), 284-295. Tate's articles, apparently overlooked by Glicksberg, include the following: Allen Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486; Allen Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (April, 1935), 161-176.

²¹ Glicksberg, "Allen Tate and Mother Earth," Sewanee Review, XLV (Summer, 1937), 285.

period (that is, according to Tate, the writings of Edgar Allan Poe) is precisely the virtue which Tate does not claim for the planter aristocrats of the Old South.²²

Another variant on the charge that Tate's undemocratic posturings have an Old Southern backdrop is illustrated by Howard Mumford Jones's article which appeared after Tate's biographies, Stonewall Jackson²³ and Jefferson Davis, as well as his poem "Ode to the Confederate Dead," had been published.²⁴ Writing on the general question "Is There a Southern Renaissance?" Jones remarked on "the deep nostalgia which the writings of Mr. Allen Tate and Mr. John Crowe Ransom display for the civilization of the slavery system."²⁵ To some readers, the implications of this remark would undoubtedly seem to be that Tate and Ransom acquiesced in, if they did not approve of, slavery. This is a question which, if it is raised, demands extended discussion. Tate's, Ransom's, and the other Agrarians' statements on slavery will, of course, be one of the central concerns of this dissertation.

²² See especially p. 485 of Tate's "Last Days of the Charming Lady" in the Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925) and pp. 268-271 of Tate's "The Profession of Letters in the South" in On the Limits of Poetry.

²³ Allen Tate, Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier--A Narrative (New York, 1928).

²⁴ Allen Tate, "Ode to the Confederate Dead (1861-1865)," in Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse (New York [1928]), pp. 127-129. See also the version of the poem which appears in Allen Tate, Mr. Pope and Other Poems (New York, 1928). Jones wrote a rather disparaging review of the latter volume. See Howard Mumford Jones, "Poet or Magician?" [review of Mr. Pope and Other Poems, by Allen Tate], Archive, XLI (December, 1928), 20-21.

²⁵ Howard Mumford Jones, "Is There a Southern Renaissance?" Virginia Quarterly Review, VI (April, 1930), 197.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION

It is not among the purposes of this dissertation to trace the history of the Fugitive magazine or to survey the writings of the Agrarians, from Vanderbilt and elsewhere, who contributed to the symposium I'll Take My Stand. Such histories have already been prepared by others.²⁶ The more modest objective of this dissertation is an analysis of the manner in which Allen Tate and certain other Agrarians of I'll Take My Stand have extracted lessons in social conservatism from what they consider to be the defects and glories of the Old South's thinkers and leaders--and from the structure of its society. Taking a leaf from Tate's notebook--his idea that the historical myths which men cherish may be one of the means by which they define a "human objective"²⁷--we shall approach the Agrarians' Old South chiefly through their myths or images of particular Old Southerners (Thomas Jefferson, John C. Calhoun, and others). The Agrarians upon whose images of the Old South we shall direct our attention include, in

²⁶ See the short histories of the Fugitive group: Allen, "The Fugitive," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLIII (October, 1944), 382-389; Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 75-84. Probably the most complete study of the Fugitive group is the following, which I was unable to see because it was not allowed to circulate in 1953 and 1954: Louise Cowan, "The Fugitive: A Critical History," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1953.

The best short summary of the Agrarian movement is Thomas J. Pressly's "Agrarianism: An Autopsy," Sewanee Review, XLIX (Spring, 1941), 145-163. See also Donald Davidson, "I'll Take My Stand: A History," American Review, V (Summer, 1935), 301-321. The best history of the Fugitive and Agrarian groups is Stewart's "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism."

²⁷ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 301.

addition to Allen Tate (our major concern), the following: Andrew Nelson Lytle, Donald Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Frank Lawrence Owsley. (All these men had been, or were, teachers or students, or both, at Vanderbilt at the time I'll Take My Stand was published.) In addition, brief comment will be made upon the contributions of John Gould Fletcher and Stark Young to I'll Take My Stand. Fletcher and Young were not Vanderbilt alumni or faculty members.²⁸

Before beginning our analysis of the Old Southern myths which Tate and the principal Vanderbilt Agrarians--Ransom, Davidson, Warren, Owsley, and Lytle--have propagated, we may do well to summarize some of the public associations of these writers with each other. As we have already mentioned, Tate, Ransom, Davidson, Warren, and Lytle were all associated with the Fugitive, the magazine of poetry (and brief literary comment) published in Nashville between April, 1922, and December, 1925. In the late twenties, these five writers participated in the Agrarian group (all but two of whom were faculty, students, or alumni of Vanderbilt University) which planned, wrote, and jointly edited²⁹ the symposium I'll Take My Stand (published in

²⁸ Fletcher's acquaintance with some of the Fugitive poets (including some of those who later launched the Agrarian movement) dates from 1926, when he returned from Europe to the United States for a visit. According to Donald Davidson, Fletcher kept up a "fairly regular correspondence" with some of the ex-Fugitives after 1926. Donald Davidson, "In Memory of John Gould Fletcher," Poetry, LXXII (December, 1950), 156.

²⁹ Donald Davidson, "The 'Mystery' of the Agrarians: Facts and Illusions about Some Southern Writers," Saturday Review of Literature, XXVI (January 23, 1943), 6-7.

1930). These five ex-Fugitives also contributed to the volume Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence,³⁰ which was edited by Allen Tate and Herbert Agar (an offspring of the British Distributists) and published in 1936. Furthermore, these same ex-Fugitives contributed articles on Southern history or culture (as well as on other subjects) to the American Review, a conservative quarterly published between 1933 and 1937 by Seward Collins. In his book The Attack on Leviathan, Donald Davidson mentioned with apparent pride the fact that Collins specifically stated his intention to make the American Review an "outlet for the views of traditionalist writers." Davidson noted that Collins named four groups of traditionalists as follows: "the English 'Distributists'--Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and others; the Southern Agrarians; the American 'Humanists'--Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and their followers; and the 'Neo-Scholastics.'"³¹ Davidson did not mention that in the same editorial in the first volume of the American Review, Collins announced that the "Fascist economics" were "badly in need of

³⁰ Of the twenty-one contributors to the volume, eight were men who had been among the twelve authors of I'll Take My Stand.

³¹ Donald Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States (Chapel Hill, 1938), p. 77. The Distributists say that small productive properties should be owned by a significant proportion of the population. Hilaire Belloc seems to have originated the term "Distributism." Herbert Agar is one of the best-known proponents of Distributism in this country. For Agar's brief description of the rise of the Agrarian group and the Distributist group, see Herbert Agar, "Free America," Free America, I (January, 1937), 1-2. See Chapter II of this dissertation for comment on the relation between Tate's thought and Hilaire Belloc's Distributism.

sympathetic expression."³²

The public association of Frank Lawrence Owsley with the five ex-Fugitive Agrarians began in the late twenties when

³² [Seward Collins], "Editorial Notes," American Review, I (April, 1933), 123-125, 127. For evidence that Collins lent a sympathetic ear to Fascism, see for example the following: S.[eward] C.[ollins], "Liberal, Socialist, Communist," American Review, II (March, 1934), 636; S.[eward] C.[ollins], "Editorial Notes: The American Review's First Year," American Review, III (April, 1934), 124-125; W. E. D. Allen, "The Fascist Idea in Britain," American Review, II (January, 1934), 328-349; Hoffman Nickerson, "Laurras," American Review, IV (December, 1934), 158, et passim.

For material which hints that eventually some Agrarians and Distributists began to feel embarrassed about their Fascist company in the American Review, see Distributist Herbert Agar's comments on the distinction between the American Review and the periodical Free America. Free America was founded at about the time that the American Review ceased publication. See Agar, Free America, I (January, 1937), 1-2. See also Agar's comment on Fascist Hoffman Nickerson on p. 13 of ibid. Hoffman Nickerson thought a dictatorship might be necessary to rid society of the "skunk cabbage of proletarianism." Nickerson, who claimed to be a Distributist, emphasized that land resettlement in Fascist Italy contrasted favorably with the failure of the "Western sham democracies" to increase the number of landowning farmers. Hoffman Nickerson, "Distributism or Democracy," Free America, I (August, 1937), 5-7.

I have no intention of implying that Tate or the other Vanderbilt Traditionalists are Fascists. For Mr. Tate's remarks on such an accusation, see the following: Allen Tate, "Fascism and the Southern Agrarians: From Mr. Tate" [correspondence], New Republic, LXXXVII (May 27, 1936), 75; Allen Tate, "Fascism and the Southern Agrarians: From Mr. Tate to the Editor" [correspondence], ibid., p. 76. Tate's contribution to a magazine (the American Review) whose editor expressed sympathy with Fascism need not imply anything about Mr. Tate's sympathies. Tate's ability to contribute book reviews to a left-wing magazine without being influenced by the magazine's point of view is illustrated in the following: Allen Tate, "Our Will-to-Death" [review of In the American Grain, by William Carlos Williams], New Masses, II (January 1927), 29; Allen Tate, "Distinguished Regression" [review of Autobiographies, by William Butler Yeats], New Masses, III (September, 1927), 31.

Owsley, a professional historian teaching at Vanderbilt, contributed to the discussions, correspondence, editing, and writing which produced the symposium I'll Take My Stand.³³ Owsley also wrote for the symposium Who Owns America?³⁴ He contributed articles on Southern society and history to the American Review. In recent years he has been engaged in statistical studies of the structure of Old Southern society.³⁵

All the Vanderbilt Traditionalists with whom we are primarily concerned--Tate, Ransom, Davidson, Lytle, Warren, and Owsley--contributed to the Southern Review, of which Warren was one of the editors from 1935 to 1942, when the magazine ceased publication. A notable example of the temporary captivity of another periodical in the hands of one of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists may be seen in the period 1943 to 1946 during which, first, Andrew N. Lytle and then Allen Tate edited the Sewanee Review. (An outstanding event of that period was the publication of Donald Davidson's article "Preface to Decision," an extreme statement on the race question which somewhat embarrassed Mr. Tate, forced him to mention some points on which he disagreed with Davidson, but did not prevent him from suggesting

³³ Richmond C. Beatty, "A Personal Memoir of the Agrarians," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 11; Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," pp. 293-294.

³⁴ Frank L. Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? pp. 52-67.

³⁵ See, for example, Frank L. Owsley and Harriet C. Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45; Frank L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South ([Baton Rouge], 1949).

in the end that Davidson's was essentially a moderate position.)³⁶ That the Vanderbilt group have not perhaps lost their sense of spiritual kinship is indicated by their statements in a symposium which was published in Shenandoah in the summer of 1952.³⁷ Although Tate, Ransom, Davidson, Lytle, Warren, and Owsley have since 1930 willingly borne the label "Agrarians," we shall refer to them as the "Vanderbilt Traditionalists" since our concern is with their return to the ante-bellum South for images of social thinkers, leaders, and a social structure superior to those of the twentieth century.

For several reasons, Allen Tate, rather than one of the other Vanderbilt contributors to I'll Take My Stand, is to be the central figure of this dissertation. In the first place, Tate has specifically discussed historical (as well as religious) myths in their relation to society.³⁸ Second, Tate has done at least as much as any other of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists to

³⁶ Donald Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 394-412; Allen Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 659-660. See pp. 465-467 of this dissertation.

³⁷ John Crowe Ransom et al., "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions" [symposium], Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 14-33. Contributors to the symposium were John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Frank L. Owsley, Allen Tate, Andrew N. Lytle, Herman C. Nixon, and John D. Wade.

³⁸ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 296-301. This essay was first published in the American Review, VII (September, 1936). In his reference to historical myth in the essay, Tate notes that T. S. Eliot had preceded him in discussing the two kinds of myth. Tate, On the Limits of Poetry, p. 297.

create revised versions of particular historical myths embodying the Old South. In a period of controversy over the nature and uses of myth, he has manufactured some partly new myths about Jefferson, Calhoun, and others--and has put his myths to work. Perhaps the most startling images are found in his biographies of Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson, works which doubtless are not read by all who are exposed to his poetry, fiction, or critical essays.

Tate has made a controversial contribution to the twentieth century's heritage of Old Southern myth. He demands special study because his vision of the Old South has been more complex than that of some of his fellow contributors to I'll Take My Stand. He has been among the most emphatic in defense of the social thought of the Old South and, upon occasion, among the most plain-spoken in admitting the defects of its social structure and the obsession with politics which was an accompaniment of that social structure. The need for an over-all examination of Tate's views on class and race in Southern society and literature may be illustrated by two instances of the complexities visible in Tate's thought if samples are taken from various stages in his career.

Challenging special attention, in the first place, are seemingly inconsistent statements on whether the Old Southern system of landholding and labor created a sense of responsibility in the landowner. In a well-known essay, originally published in 1935, Tate presents the Southern plantation system as one which did not in itself encourage in the owner a responsible attitude toward his property: "The landlord might be humane,

but he owed no legal obligation to his land (he could wear it out) or to his labor (he could turn it off; called . . . 'selling' under Negro slavery),"³⁹ Tate declares. But in the comparatively little-known biography, Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall, published in 1929, Tate says that the plantation system in the Lower South produced a responsible ruling class precisely because of the manner in which land and labor were owned: an agrarian class's identification of its power with "inherited responsibility" is, Tate maintains in Jefferson Davis, the "best basis for a society"; and "in the Lower South it produced a genuine ruling class." Here Tate chooses to attribute the sense of responsibility to the manner in which the master owned land and slaves: "Men were bound," Tate explains, "by their responsibility to a definite physical legacy--land and slaves--which more and more, as Southern society tended to become stable after 1850, checked the desire for mere wealth and power."⁴⁰ Implying that the plantation system promoted in the planter a sense of obligation to his land, to his slave labor, and indeed to all other social classes, Tate concludes:

³⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," ibid., p. 274. Here Tate is speaking of the eighteenth-century English squire and the nineteenth-century Southern landowner and slaveowner. He implies the inferiority of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century land and labor systems to the earlier feudal system. Ibid.

⁴⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 55. Compare this quotation from Jefferson Davis with the following statement from Tate's essay entitled "The Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 26, 1925), 485-486: "[T]he second generation after the Civil War . . . , like its forebears, has no tradition of ideas, no consciousness of moral and spiritual values, as an inheritance; it has simply lost a prerogative based on property." Italics mine.

Men are everywhere the same, and it is only the social system that imposes a check upon the acquisitive instinct, accidentally and as the condition of a certain prosperity, that in the end makes for stability and creates the close ties among all classes which distinguished [sic] a civilization from a mere social machine. 41

The innocent reader of Tate's critical essay and his biography of Jefferson Davis may well ask, at this point, how that system under which the planter "owed no legal obligation to his land . . . or . . . his labor"⁴² could be said to bind the planter "by a responsibility to a definite physical legacy--land and slaves" and to develop in him a behavior or an attitude promoting "close ties among all classes."⁴³

As a second appetizer before the dissertation, a provocative example may be cited of Tate's propensity for changing roles in his relation to the Old South--that is, for exhibiting in his actions at one time the perversity of the iconoclast and at another time the blindness of the idolator. On the one hand, Tate has shattered that feature of the Old Southern image which depicted the plantation owner as the cultivated student of belles-lettres; on the other hand, he has upon occasion (though not upon every occasion) looked with considerable complacency upon

⁴¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 55-56. Of Tate's Jefferson Davis the New York Times book review said: "This fine study is open to no adverse criticism at all, not even that of an occasional error." C. W. Thompson [Review of Jefferson Davis, by Allen Tate], New York Times Book Review, October 6, 1929, p. 3. See footnote 291 on p. 363 of this dissertation, for discussion of an error in Tate's Jefferson Davis.

⁴² Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 274.

⁴³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 55-56.

that feature of the Old South which to the "rational humanitarian"⁴⁴ appears ugliest--slavery.

In 1925, early in his literary career, Tate wrote a satiric piece on the "Last Days of the Charming Lady," who was supposedly trying to keep alive the memory of the Old South. Predicting that the Charming Lady, who dwelt among magnolias and lilacs, would "scarcely survive the . . . decade" of the twenties, Tate remarked that her conversation was "an elegy on the perished amenities of the Old South."⁴⁵ Tate then went on to give his own version of the kind of society which had produced those alleged amenities in the Old South. "[T]he grandfather of our Charming Lady," he remarked, "was a civilized person chiefly, but not entirely in certain ante-bellum towns, because he and the other grandfathers happened to be the gentlemen who got together in the matter and agreed that it was so."⁴⁶ The polite manners which flourished in the Old South as a result of this gentlemen's agreement were, Tate implied, little more than "sentimental chivalry."⁴⁷ Most damaging of all was Tate's implication that these self-designated ante-bellum gentlemen were determined to keep their political and economic privileges at any price, even at the price (appalling to Tate) of denying to

⁴⁴ I have borrowed this term from James Blish's article "Rituals on Ezra" in the Sewanee Review, LVIII (Spring, 1950), 206. His article is about the controversy attending the award of the Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound.

⁴⁵ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 486.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 485.

their culture the conditions which might make possible the growth of a fine literature. "The Old South," Tate's indictment ran, "was strictly a political and economic aristocracy." It ignored belles-lettres and religion in its single-minded attempt to prevent any social change which would have unseated its gentlemen from their privileged chairs. "It would have shuddered," Tate continued (donning his modernism with a flourish),

could it have grasped the first implications of a French critic's [Remy de Gourmont?] assertion that only through the abolition of truths, through the dissociation and repudiation of outmoded general notions which have lost their roots in an existing reality, can a society create new forms for the perpetuation of its strength. The South was beautifully devoted unto the death to its one idea--the permanence of a special politico-economic order. An essential literature was impossible. The South could not afford to look at itself critically; and it is a commonplace in the history of intelligence that spontaneous self-examination--which the Charming Lady permits to neither herself nor her visitor--is the initial moral attitude which must preface the exacting business of beautiful letters. It implies the recognition of a relation extra-social: the relation of man to a god. The South, before the Civil War, probably had little more than incidental commerce with the name of Deity. Its aristocracy needed but few of the privileges of which the sole storehouse, according to the best imaginative opinion, stands in some empyrean; it was an aristocracy of social privilege founded in a rigid social order. Deprived of that order,

Tate concluded, demolishing, with a remark, the Charming Lady or anyone who claimed that an ante-bellum tradition survived in the twentieth-century South, "the Old South has degenerated into and survives only as a sentiment susceptible of no precise definition."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid. The "French critic" mentioned here by Tate is presumably Remy de Gourmont. For de Gourmont's essay, see Remy de Gourmont, Decadence and Other Essays on the Culture of Ideas, tr. William Aspenwall Bradley, (New York, 1921), pp. 3-35.

The Old South described here was a "stable" society, many readers would think, but it was scarcely an attractive one. And many readers would probably not regret the demise of its tradition. But about three years after "The Last Days of the Charming Lady," Tate initiated what is perhaps the twentieth century's most impressive attempt to define the tradition which the society of the Old South supposedly incarnated. In Stonewall Jackson (published in 1928), the same Tate who three years earlier had given an invidious description of the Southern "aristocracy" presented slavery in the Old South as a "necessary element in a stable society."⁴⁹ Having begun in 1925 by poking fun at the good manners⁵⁰ and alleged intellectual cultivation of the Old Southern aristocracy (characteristics which have often been attributed to that class), Tate in 1928 perversely defended the Achilles' heel of the old regime--slavery. No longer was the Old South ridiculed for being "devoted to the death" to a particular economic and political order. The idea of a "stable" society of fixed social classes was presented as admirable. John C. Calhoun (Tate maintained in Stonewall Jackson) "had argued justly that only in a society of fixed classes can men be free." "Only men who are socially as well as economically secure can preserve the historical sense of

⁴⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39. Tate's exact words: "Slavery was a positive good only in the sense that Calhoun had argued it was: it had become a necessary element in a stable society." Ibid.

⁵⁰ Tate did not deny the existence of good manners in the Old South--he merely implied they were the adornment of a narcissistic aristocracy. Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486.

obligation," Tate declared.⁵¹ Tate now found that the sentiment of the white man toward the slave was "susceptible of . . . precise definition":⁵²

[The] historical sense of obligation [preserved by men because they were socially as well as economically secure] implied a certain freedom to do right. In the South, between White and Black, it took the form of benevolent protection: the White man was in every sense responsible for the Black. 53

The discontinuities, apparent or real, between some of the Allen Tates are an important business of this dissertation. Only those Tates who concern themselves with race and class in Old Southern society will, however, be examined. Allen Tate, the double if not the multiple man, will be presented in relation to other Vanderbilt Traditionalists who have at one time or another used the Old South as a weapon with which to fight liberal democracy in the twentieth century. The purpose of this collating of these Traditionalists' views will be to see (1) whether there are significant similarities in their versions of, and attitudes toward, Old Southern social principles and (2) whether their Old Southern history or myth may impede developments toward racial equality in the South and support the idea of a society of relatively fixed social classes--or even a society of racial castes.

⁵¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

⁵² Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485. I have borrowed the quoted phrase for my own purposes.

⁵³ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

Looking back in 1942 on the Fugitive years, Tate himself said that the members of that group "had a sort of unity of feeling . . . which came out of--to give it a big name--a common historical myth." And he added: "its [the myth, rather than the feeling, I presume] use for the dramatic and lyrical arts, I believe, is that it expresses itself in the simple ritual of greeting a friend in the street."⁵⁴ Ultimately motivating our study is the following question: Have Tate and some of his friends of Fugitive and Agrarian days constructed versions of Old Southern myth which may aid in the growth or perpetuation of social "rituals" less innocuous than the greeting of a friend in the street? Andrew Nelson Lytle has said that the "Lincoln myth" is a "bad myth" because it "helps to sustain the industrial imperialism which was made possible by Lincoln's successful prosecution of the war."⁵⁵ Our guiding question will be whether some of the Vanderbilt writers' Old Southern myths may not provide sanctions for a society of relatively fixed or persistent classes and particularly for the doctrine of white supremacy. As we examine the Jefferson image, the Calhoun image, or other historical myths created by Tate, we shall ask whether these images are from the viewpoint of the rational humanitarian "bad myths." Inevitably we shall also ask, from time to time, whether these images are the product of "bad

⁵⁴ Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 83.

⁵⁵ Andrew N. Lytle, "The Lincoln Myth," Virginia Quarterly Review, VII (October, 1931), 624.

history"--that is, whether these images ignore or grossly distort important historical facts.

In studying Tate's vision of Old Southern leaders and Old Southern society, we shall concentrate upon his nonfiction. Our concern is not with Tate as a professional artist but with Tate as an historian or pseudo-historian (sometimes distinctly unprofessional in his manner) and with others of the Vanderbilt group (including the professional historian Frank L. Owsley) as they have set forth in essays, reviews, biographies, and historical treatises what they consider to be the essential good of Old Southern thought and action in the matter of social or racial classes. Sometimes, to be sure, we shall deal with fiction or poetry--for example, Tate's early poems, his novel The Fathers,⁵⁶ and Robert Penn Warren's poem Brother to Dragons⁵⁷--but we shall make no pretense of elucidating the whole meaning of these works. We shall discuss the Vanderbilt writers' fiction and poetry only in so far as they illuminate what these writers have to say about the conservatism or liberalism of Old Southerners on questions of race and class.

As we examine the historical writings of Tate and the other Vanderbilt Traditionalists, we shall sometimes make the kind of judgment that Donald Davidson makes on Charles A. Beard's writings--that is, we shall, in effect, say: "Such historical

⁵⁶ Allen Tate, The Fathers (New York, 1938).

⁵⁷ Robert Penn Warren, Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices (New York, 1953).

interpretation is propaganda, or it is poetry; it is not, with such wholesale and needless omissions, history of the exact, scrupulous, and scientific order which we are taught to think is the ideal of the research scholar."⁵⁸ For obvious reasons, we shall find cause to use the term "poetry" or "myth" invidiously in reference to Tate's nonfiction more frequently than we shall find reason to say that his fiction and poetry are simple propaganda. Indeed, considering Tate's avowed dislike of poetry that is "primarily allegorical,"⁵⁹ we should not in general expect to find in Tate's imaginative works simple propaganda for the good Old Southern ideas to which he pays tribute in his historical writings. Such propaganda, when it does occur in his imaginative works, is indeed an ironic commentary on his claim that in his fiction and poetry he cannot see "any allegiance to group, class, organization, region, religion, [or] system of thought" and that as an artist his "business" is merely to "render in words the experience of people, whatever movement of ideas they may be caught up in."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Davidson, "Two Interpretations of American History," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 36.

⁵⁹ Tate, "Three Types of Poetry," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 95-97.

⁶⁰ Allen Tate, "The Situation in American Writing: Seven Questions," Partisan Review, VI (Summer, 1939), 29. Tate admits that his writings are "influenced" by such forces as group, class, etc. Ibid.

III. PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The plan of the dissertation is as follows: (1) in Chapter II, a summary of the qualities which Tate finds in good historical myth, a comment on his early concern about the inaccessibility of the Southern past, and a sketch of the larger historical myth (encompassing medieval and modern European history) within which his specific images of Old Southern thought and society have taken form; (2) in Chapter III, an analysis of how Tate and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists have ignored or repudiated, emphasized or admired, or modified and adapted to their purposes various elements in the social philosophy of Thomas Jefferson and John Taylor of Caroline; (3) in Chapter IV, a study of how Tate and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists have tried to make reputable the social philosophy of John C. Calhoun and some other extremely conservative Old Southern social thinkers; (4) in Chapter V, a study of how Tate and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists have generalized about the actual social structure of the South in the late ante-bellum period; how they have used certain figures--e.g., Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, the Abolitionists--as images of forces inimical to the direction in which Southern society should have continued to develop; and how they have pictured Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Nathan Bedford Forrest--leaders who were charged with defending good old Southern principles in the crisis of Civil War.

CHAPTER II
TOWARDS GOOD OLD SOUTHERN MYTH

. . . by what illuminations
Are you intelligible? . . .
.
. Where is the light
When the pigeon moults his ease
Or exile utters the creed of memory?

Allen Tate, "Ignis Fatuus,"
Poems: 1922-1947, p. 153.

I. THE NATURE AND USE OF MYTH

Whether or not one is theologically inclined, some "incidental commerce"¹ with Mr. Ransom's idea of deity may be a kind of initiation into the mysteries of Mr. Tate's Old Southern demigods and demons. Although Tate's and Ransom's definitions of myth could hardly be labelled the standardized products of one machine, they do have several almost interchangeable parts. Ransom's description, in God Without Thunder,² of the good religious myth is analogous in several respects to Tate's description of the good image (or myth) of past men and societies. If the remarks of Tate and Ransom cited in the following pages seem unremarkable, it should be remembered that they are presented not as contributions to the science of myth but as notes toward the definition of that inscrutable object, Allen Tate.

Both Ransom and Tate stress that they may be doing violence when they undertake to discuss their own favorite myths. Ideally,

¹ The quoted phrase only is from Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

² John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy (New York, 1930). See footnote 33 in Chapter IV of this dissertation for a brief comment on Ransom's interest in the controversy between Fundamentalism and Modernism in religion.

they imply, a good myth need not be defended by closely reasoned argument; nor need it be examined critically by the believer. The myth is by definition hypothetical--and permanently unverifiable by laboratory methods or mathematical calculations. A myth, Tate says, ought to be "in conviction immediate, direct, overwhelming."³ In other words, the good myth (whether religious or historical) says to its would-be believers "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Ransom and Tate apologize for their apologia in behalf of myths:⁴ the genuine myth, Tate seems to believe, would be its own propagator if the Western mind were not so science-ridden.⁵ Indeed, Tate goes so far as to imply that when a culture is in a healthy state, "tradition" compels men to be spontaneously loyal to certain religious or historical images in preference to others.⁶

The three primary qualities of a good myth, according to both Ransom and Tate, are that it be "concrete," that it give a "complete" account of that which it undertakes to embody, and that its characters be of dimension large enough to win our respect.

³ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 156.

⁴ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. x; and Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 156-157.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 162-164.

⁶ Ibid., p. 162. Cf. the revised version of this essay: Tate, "Religion and the Old South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 311. Tate has changed certain key words in the first sentence of this passage. Tate evidently dislikes what he seems to think is the "scientific" attitude toward history--an attitude which he calls the "Long View" and which is, he says, the "cosmopolitan destroyer of tradition." Ibid.

First, the good myth, whether its substance is religious or historical, must be concrete; it must satisfy the senses. Ransom seems to pity those timid would-be religionists who are "afraid of the vigor of concrete myth," who "dare not risk the charge that they are guilty of anthropomorphism, or of idolatry." Such people, Ransom says, "deny to God all his substantial existence."⁷ They are the congregation of the "modern preacher" who "addresses his public prayer to an abstraction, and is careful not to require of the worshippers more than the minimum of that indignity that consists in entertaining a lively image of the God."⁸ "Ghosts"--that is, mythical creations or "imagined objects"--are entities to which we "resort for the sake of sensible experience when we are baffled by the historical objects,"⁹ Ransom says. In his chapter on "finite ghosts,"¹⁰ Ransom takes up "those fabulous objects"--such as an imaginary representation of the state of Pennsylvania or the United States of America--which "we make up for the satisfaction of our senses when they are defeated by the barrenness of certain objects."¹¹ What Tate calls myths of the "historical imagination"¹²--for example, the image of Cicero which appealed to Old Southerners¹³--may, we suppose, belong to the species which Ransom designates

⁷ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 87.

⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

⁹ Ibid., p. 250. Italics mine.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 247-274.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 271. Italics mine.

¹² Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 298.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 296-297.

as "finite ghosts."¹⁴

Tate seems to pity those students of human nature or human history who are afraid to risk creating some visible ghost of a past culture--a ghost which they can contemplate and perhaps reverence. Part of Tate's attack on the American Humanists (Irving Babbitt, Norman Foerster, and Paul Elmer More) was due to his conviction that they were incapable of creating or responding to a concrete myth of some past society. The Humanists, Tate said, though they claimed that man's "ethical imagination" was what distinguished him from the beasts, did not themselves know how to deal in images. According to Tate, the Humanists "give us only a digest [rather than an image or myth] of the ancient cultures" and "leave to abstract inference a conception of the particular culture in which the humane life may be lived"¹⁵ Tate ridiculed the Humanists for their inability to imagine "the only classical and humanistic culture" this country has ever had--that is (according to Tate), the culture of the Old South. The Humanists' efforts were "socially vacuous,"¹⁶ Tate implied, in that they "refused to go through the difficulty of slavery"¹⁷ to contemplate the image of a society within which the humane life was possible. The past as examined by the Humanists was

¹⁴ See the chapter entitled "Finite Ghosts" in Ransom, God Without Thunder, pp. 247-274.

¹⁵ Allen Tate, "Humanism and Naturalism," Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (New York, 1936), pp. 120-121.

¹⁶ Allen Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51.

¹⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 45.

dead, according to Tate, in that the Humanists offered no live myths--that is, they offered no concrete images of past moments.

As necessary as concreteness is the second feature of the satisfactory myth, according to the prescriptions of Ransom and Tate: that second feature is completeness or wholeness. Ransom and Tate agree that the religious myth which does not include the inscrutable, capricious, or (from the point of view of natural man) cruel features of nature or God is an incomplete or incompetent myth.¹⁸ The religion which ignores evil--that is, does not place evil squarely in the nature of things, man, and even God--is only a half-religion, a pseudo-religion of works,¹⁹ which has not imagined a complete representation of reality.

To be more specific: One of the prerequisites of good religious myth, according to Ransom's God Without Thunder, is that the myth posit a deity who authorizes and sanctions evil as well as good. The "religion that ignores" the "contingencies that may cut short human life at the height of its flower" and "sets up a God that does not authorize or sanction them, but only vainly if hopefully wars upon them, is hardly a competent religion,"²⁰ Ransom remarks in his analysis of the modernist's emasculated God without thunder.

A question about the relation of religious myth to social justice may occur to the reader of God Without Thunder. The

¹⁸ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 179; Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 158-159.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 179.

"rational humanitarian"²¹--that is, the modernist against whom Ransom's thunderbolts are directed--may inquire whether it is socially desirable that man worship a God who authorizes and sanctions evil. One may even go so far as to say, as did a writer on the controversy about Ezra Pound's anti-Semitism, that "from the point of view of the rational humanitarian most myths are offensive because they impede the spread of social justice" and that "myths which actually retard social justice seem particularly loathsome . . . and become even more culpable if they seem to command actual (metaphysical) belief."²² Mr. Ransom's myth would seem to many "rational humanitarians" to be an example of the latter kind of myth.

According to Ransom, the religious myth which purports only to facilitate the spread of social justice is, if not a loathsome, then at least a feeble and unrealistic, myth. Ransom attacks modern Christianity for replacing the Old Testament deity, who is the author of evil as well as good, with a Christ who is the "embodiment mostly of the principle of social benevolence and of physical welfare."²³ The West, Ransom says, has substituted Christian socialism²⁴ and a "morality of social

²¹ Blish, "Rituals on Ezra," Sewanee Review, LVIII (Spring, 1950), 206.

²² Ibid. Italics mine. This sentence is not representative of Mr. Blish's own final opinion about the uses or misuses of myth.

²³ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 5.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 146.

distribution"²⁵ for the older, genuine, and more complete religious myth of Jehovah. (We may note at this point that both Ransom and Tate have remarked on the South's lack of interest in humanitarianism. Tate observes that Fundamentalism "fortunately . . . still reigns" in the South and that "the South as a whole remains stolidly sceptical of the social mission of the church.")²⁶

Positivism, as defined by Tate, is practically indistinguishable in its avowals and intentions from that modern Christianity which, Ransom says, has as its god only an incarnation of the "principle of social benevolence and of physical welfare."²⁷ According to Tate, positivism is a "demi-religion"²⁸ or pseudo-myth which promises to banish all natural and social evil as soon as it can accumulate enough information. Unlike positivism, a complete or whole religion "predicts" that man will have failures as well as successes: a complete religion, Tate emphasizes, does not lose sight of the "traditional experience of evil which is the common lot of the race."²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., p. 147. See also ibid., pp. 34-35.

²⁶ Allen Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 426. See also John Crowe Ransom, "Hearts and Heads," American Review, II (March, 1934), 562.

²⁷ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 5.

²⁸ Tate, "Literature as Knowledge: Comment and Comparison," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 48.

²⁹ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 157-160. See also Tate, On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 6, 103, 106. Cf. Ransom's attack on modern science, which (he says) thinks that evil is a "function of human ignorance" and that we can get rid of evil as we know more. Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 165.

A third quality which the good myth exhibits is largeness of dimension, both Tate and Ransom point out. The satisfying image of the deity or of the Fathers of one's culture will be grand enough to command respect. This largeness of dimension, characteristic of the best myth, seems (if one follows the argument of Ransom) to be a possible result of the Fundamentalist believer's decision to commit himself to one myth instead of letting his myth-making or myth-admiring instincts run riot.³⁰ Tate applies a similar principle to historical myth. In effect, he recommends a Fundamentalist devotion to the myth of one's own society. The historian looking at the past of his native land should see a "highly sympathetic society," Tate remarks in his review of U. B. Phillips' Life and Labor in the Old South. It is desirable, Tate implies, that the historian commit himself to an exaggerated image of his own culture's past. Though the pictures made by modern "scientific" historians (like Buckle) may be "photographically truer" than those made by the more "Plutarchian" historians (like U. B. Phillips) who enlarge the dimensions of the past, "the dogma is not refuted that the past should be magnified in order to keep the present in its place";³¹ in these words, Tate seems to sanction the delightful illusions to be gained by looking backward through field glasses--especially if one can believe he is looking through his own eyes alone.

On the qualities found in good myth Ransom and Tate seem to

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 95ff.

³¹ Allen Tate, "Life in the Old South," New Republic, LIX (July 10, 1929), 212.

be in agreement. As to the social uses of myth, Tate and Ransom also appear to think somewhat alike.

Religious myth and historical myth, if one judges by Tate's essay entitled "What Is a Traditional Society?", are expected by Tate to keep men in their place--that is, to keep them performing a human, rather than a subhuman or superhuman, role. After speaking of the Old Southerners' dramatization of themselves in terms of the myth of "noble Romans," Tate deplores twentieth-century man's mythless condition: "men who have lost both the higher myth of religion and the lower myth of historical dramatization have lost the forms of human action," Tate says. Such mythless men are "no longer capable of defining a human objective, of forming a dramatic conception of human nature."³² Evidently Tate thinks that myth has a definite bearing upon the way men deal with each other, though it is difficult to determine precisely what Tate means by "the forms of human action." That Tate does not wish to admit that a myth can tell us what to do when, for instance, we suspect we are not paying the maid enough, is suggested by another well-known passage in which he discusses the historical imagination of the Old Southerners--that is, their ability to keep the "historical fact"³³ (for example, Cato)³⁴

³² Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 301.

³³ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 169.

³⁴ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 298.

"concrete." In this passage, Tate commends the Old Southerners because for them the "historical fact" had "a certain status as image." The relation between image (or myth) and action must not be too intimate, Tate seems to imply here: "images are only to be contemplated," Tate remarks primly--and adds that "perhaps the act of contemplation after long exercise initiates a habit of restraint, and the setting up of absolute standards which are less formulas for action than an interior discipline of the mind." "[F]ormulas for action,"³⁵ Tate would probably feel, are what the liberal, or scientific, historian tries to abstract from his studies of history as a chain of cause and effect. Tate (in this he resembles the early Ransom of God Without Thunder) is exceedingly suspicious of the "generalizations" or laws of cause and effect which the "liberal historian" reads into history.³⁶ Perhaps the specific recommendations for action which the liberal historian offers after dissecting some past period may not be pleasing to Tate. At any rate, Tate has persisted in his attacks on the "historical method," which he wishes to

³⁵ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 169.

³⁶ See Allen Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 736-738. Cf. Ransom, God Without Thunder, pp. 56ff. Ransom perhaps preceded Tate in being suspicious of historians' attempts to study the past as a record within which laws of cause and effect can be discerned. Note also Andrew N. Lytle's feeling that "it seems . . . highly arbitrary to place the historian among the social scientists." See Andrew N. Lytle, "The Image as Guide to Meaning in the Historical Novel," Sewanee Review, LXI (Summer, 1953), 410. Tate has hinted that he prefers Oswald Spengler's "Physiognomic Tact" to the kind of mentality which has given us "three hundred years of causal history." Allen Tate, "Spengler's Tract against Liberalism," American Review, III (April, 1934), 42.

distinguish from the "historical imagination."³⁷

Tate himself read some laws of cause and effect into history when he formulated, in 1930, his best-known statement on the relation of myth to the preservation of the social structure. In his philosophical account (in I'll Take My Stand) of why the social order of the Old South did not endure, Tate announced a diagnosis which he liked well enough to republish in his Reactionary Essays (1936) and in On the Limits of Poetry (1948). The South, Tate said, has suffered from metaphysical malnutrition. It failed to "realize its genius in time" to successfully complete a separation from the North, it failed to use religious (instead of eighteenth-century political) terms to defend its society, and its "social structure began grievously to break down two generations after the Civil War"--all because its society did not possess an "appropriate" religious myth, a myth which would have made its "special secular system the inevitable and permanently valuable one." "[F]or," Tate explained, "the social structure depends on the economic structure, and

³⁷ Tate implies, though he does not clearly define, a distinction between the "historical method" and the "historical imagination" when he alludes to Carl Becker's The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers. See Tate, "Miss Emily and the Bibliographer," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 56. A reading of Becker's book and a reading of Tate's essay "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism" suggest a possible reason for Tate's attack on the "historical method": Tate seems to feel that the historian who is unwilling to admit the validity of theological absolutes is employing the "historical method" with a vengeance, whereas the historian who points out, without condescension, how a former age thought it was living by theological absolutes is writing out of the "historical imagination." See Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 736-738. See also Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932)--especially the first chapter.

Compare with Tate's attitude Ransom's recent reluctance to see theological absolutes in history. See John Crowe Ransom, "Empirics in Politics," Kenyon Review, XV (Autumn, 1953), 649-654.

economic conviction is the secular image of religion."³⁸

³⁸ Despite his preoccupation with religion in this essay, Tate's account of the rise of the Southern feudalism had a secular bias. He suggested that the society's not being "aggressive" or "materialistic" was due to "certain conditions of economy." He did not say that moral choice or the people's theological convictions caused the development of such a society. (In fact, he seemed to accept the scientific historian's view that the "propitious soil and climate" were the factors making it possible for a "feudal i.e., for Tate, a good labor system to take root and thrive.") Nor did he suggest that a proper religion would have criticized the Old Southern social structure. His implication was, rather, that an adequate (i.e., a non-Protestant) religion would have defended, not merely slavery (which, as Tate pointed out, the Southern Protestantism did defend), but the whole Southern social and economic structure. Tate's religious interest seemed to be primarily pragmatic in this passage. Ibid., pp. 166-168.

A revised version of Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion" called the Old Southern social order "semi-feudal," implying that it could not have been fully feudal without a feudal religion. By making this alteration in the essay, Tate diluted his admiration of the secular system of the Old South--that is, its social structure and its labor system. Yet he still maintained that the breakdown of the Southern social structure (a breakdown which he said began two generations after the Civil War) was "due to her lack of a religion which would make her special way of life the inevitable and permanently valuable one." Tate, "Religion and the Old South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 315-317.

In addition to Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion" (or "Religion and the Old South"), his various other statements on the relation of the Southern religion to the Southern social structure should be noted. For the liberal, the least objectionable of these statements is probably that in Tate's early essay "Last Days of the Charming Lady," in the Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486. (See pp. 54-57 and p. 61 of this dissertation.) Unattractive to the liberal is Tate's relative satisfaction at the Fundamentalist tone of the modern South. (See p. 37 of this dissertation.)

Likely to be puzzling to the liberal are Tate's alternations between joy and lamentation over the Southern religion. The explanation for Tate's ambivalence toward Southern Protestantism may be the following: Tate seems to think that the Southern religion, old and new, is better than the humanitarian Modernism which he believes is the religion characteristic of democratic-industrial society; at the same time, he evidently feels that only a non-Protestant religion could have been a really adequate support for the Old South's social structure as a whole. See Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 166-173.

Thus pontificated Tate. And shortly before Tate's publishing of these remarks, Ransom had emphasized the positive relation between the religious myth and the social and economic life of a people. In God Without Thunder, published in 1930 (Tate's "Remarks" were published later in 1930), Ransom pictures the myth-maker as legislator for a people:

[the] community in accepting his myth professes to a certain view of the human relation to the universe, and to an economic theory which is appropriate to that relation. The religion of a people is that background of metaphysical doctrine which dictates its political economy. And all its constituent myths, its ritual, its documents in their detail, have their effective part in this purpose; they serve for instruction and reproof, they bear on the economic program. 39

Both Ransom and Tate seem to believe that in a healthy culture the people's social and economic life is integrated with their religious myth. Tate seems to believe that a social structure may collapse because it is not sustained by a suitable myth.

The role of a proper myth in sustaining a social structure is apparently what Richard M. Weaver (an apologist for, and in many ways an intellectual kinsman of, Allen Tate and some other Vanderbilt Traditionalists) was referring to when he spoke of the "non-empirical bonds" which may hold together a "deep-rooted organic society . . . expressing in its structure a certain differentiation of calling."⁴⁰ Certainly Mr. Robert

³⁹ Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 116.

⁴⁰ The quoted passage is Weaver's description of what some Vanderbilt Traditionalists saw in both Southern and European society when they had had the opportunity to observe Europe through residence abroad after the first World War and in the 1920's. Richard M. Weaver, "Agrarianism in Exile," Sewanee Review, LVIII (Autumn, 1950), 588. For information on Weaver and his ideas, see pp. 111n, 66, 203-206, 275n, and 305n of this dissertation.

Penn Warren was assuming the socially unifying function of some myths when (in 1939) he quoted, with apparent enthusiasm, Mr. F. Cudworth Flint's call for "'a structure of life capable of appealing both to the simple and the learned, . . . a mythology credible, and capable of being embodied in poetry of epic magnitude."⁴¹ That a suitable myth may help maintain harmony or unity among social classes is, it seems to me, an implication of Mr. Weaver's and Mr. Warren's remarks. Doubtless both liberal and conservative critics of contemporary society would admit that some kind of social harmony may be produced among learned and simple, privileged and nonprivileged, if an effective myth is widely propagated in the society. Whether the specific myths of the Old South manufactured by Tate and Company tend to reinforce or to foster a desirable kind of social harmony or stability is, it may be emphasized again, the major question underlying this dissertation. The Vanderbilt Traditionalists (who in many respects fall into the category of conservative critics of contemporary society) would not, of course, say that we have, today, a society worthy of a sustaining myth. At the same time, the liberal reader of the Traditionalists, though he may be impressed by their criticisms of contemporary American society, ought to look sharply at those images of past societies which they find attractive. If, as Tate and Ransom say, religious myth may be the sustainer of a

⁴¹ F. Cudworth Flint, as quoted in Robert Penn Warren, "The Present State of Poetry: III, In the United States" [part of a symposium], Kenyon Review, I (Autumn, 1939), 398.

society, may it not perhaps also be conjectured that a historical myth--such as a myth of the Old South--may play a part in sustaining certain undesirable survivals from the past--such as the doctrine of white supremacy?

Before we consider in detail the images of the Old South constructed by Tate and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists after 1926, we shall look, first, at the versions of Old Southern life which--as far back as Fugitive days (1922-1925)⁴²--Ransom, Davidson, and Tate felt compelled to ridicule or regret; and, second, at some social ideas which were current in European books and periodicals in the 1920's and which have apparently colored the vision of the Old South which Tate set about creating after 1926.

II. THE INACCESSIBILITY OF GOOD OLD SOUTHERN MYTH

It is well known that the Fugitive (the magazine to which Tate contributed regularly between 1922 and 1925 and which he helped to edit) expressed contempt for sentimental, picturesque literature about the Old South. John Lincoln Stewart notes, as have others, the fact that the unsigned foreword to the first issue of the Fugitive announced, in the following terms, a repudiation of Southern sentimentalism of the "moonlight-and-magnolias" variety:

Official exception having been taken by the sovereign

⁴² See pp. 9-11 of this dissertation.

people to the mint julep, a literary phase rather euphemistically known as Southern literature has expired, like any other stream whose source is stopped up. The demise was not untimely: among other advantages THE FUGITIVE is enabled to come to birth in Nashville, Tennessee, under a star not entirely unsympathetic. THE FUGITIVE flees from nothing faster than from the high caste Brahmins of the Old South. Without raising the question of whether the blood in the veins of its editors runs red, they at any rate are not advertising it as blue; indeed, as to pedigree, they cheerfully invite the most unfavorable inference from the circumstance of their anonymity.⁴³

Stewart points out that Ransom, in particular, brought to the Fugitive a dislike of the sentimentalism of such poets as Karle Wilson Baker, Roselle Montgomery, Josephine Pinckney, and Beatrice Ravenel, who were "dominated by the legend of the Old South" and whose poetic attitude was utterly different from "the ironic attitude and its inclusiveness."⁴⁴ Similarly, in an article which preceded Stewart's dissertation, Charles Allen declares that, if one wishes to, one can assume from the choice of a name for the Fugitive that the Vanderbilt poets "were fleeing from, or attacking, the shackles of the sentimental poetry of their day"--poetry marked by such features as "[p]illars in the moonlight, pale mysterious ladies, Uncle Tom niggers, singsong lassitude, etc."⁴⁵

⁴³ [Unsigned], "Foreword," Fugitive, I (April, 1922), 1. John Lincoln Stewart quotes this passage on p. 84 of his dissertation, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism."

⁴⁴ Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," p. 83.

⁴⁵ Allen, "The Fugitive," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLIII (October, 1944), 386.

The views of Charles Allen and John Lincoln Stewart are sound as far as they go, but neither calls attention to the fact that the Fugitive's criticism of sentimental Southern poetry points toward Tate's later insistence that superficial encomiums of the Old South may be a most effective means of murdering the real values of Old Southern society.⁴⁶ Aside from the manifesto ridiculing the "high caste Brahmins of the Old South," the most obvious evidence for Stewart's and Allen's well-founded contention that the Fugitive poets resented certain sentimental literary references to the Old South is a lively editorial--apparently a joint onslaught by both Tate and Davidson--attacking Harriet Monroe. Careful study of the attack--and of Tate's poetry published at about the same time--suggests that Tate was already preoccupied not only with the fact that existing literature about the Old South was too sentimental but also with the question of why a serious tradition embodying values from the Southern past was virtually inaccessible to the twentieth-century mind. The authors of the attack were apparently Tate and Davidson, the editors of the Fugitive at the time.⁴⁷ They

⁴⁶ See pp. 58-60 of this dissertation.

⁴⁷ The unsigned attack, entitled "Merely Prose," appeared in the Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 66. In the issue of the Fugitive for August-September, 1923, Davidson and Tate announced themselves as editors and assumed responsibility for the unsigned editorial, "Merely Prose," in the preceding issue. See the Fugitive, II (August-September, 1923), 99. In a later statement, Tate implied that Harriet Monroe pinned responsibility for the editorial on Davidson. See Allen Tate, "A Polite Protest," Poetry, XXV (December, 1924), 169-170.

were enraged by Miss Monroe's "opin[ing]"⁴⁸ that the "'soft silken reminiscent life of the Old South [was] . . . becoming articulate'" and by her presumably recommending to Southern poets the interpretation "'of a region so specialized in beauty, so rich in racial tang and prejudice, so jewel-weighted with a heroic past.'"⁴⁹ Many Southern poets, the Fugitive's editorial declared, might not care to write about the Old South and would "guffaw at the fiction that the Southern writer of today must embalm and serve up an ancient dish."⁵⁰ Thus far the Fugitive's controversy with Miss Monroe seemed to suggest no more than the fact (noted by John Lincoln Stewart and Charles Allen) that the editors of the Fugitive were disdainful of poetry about the Old South because much of that poetry was sentimental. A significant statement in the next installment of the controversy hinted, however, that the editors of the Fugitive had more than mere disdain for the sentimental Southern poets and their admirers: in the Fugitive for August-September, 1923, the editorial complained that "a review [such as Harriet Monroe's, presumably] of the literature recording some of atavism and more of sentimentality may have much to do with rendering a 'jewel-weighted' tradition

⁴⁸ [Unsigned], "Merely Prose," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 68.

⁴⁹ H. [arriet] M. [onroe], "The Old South" [review of Carolina Chansons: Legends of the Low Country, by DuBose Heyward and Hervey Allen], Poetry, XXII (May, 1923), as quoted in [Unsigned], "Merely Prose," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 66.

⁵⁰ [Unsigned], "Merely Prose," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 66.

inaccessible to many of the present Southern poets."⁵¹ This statement implied that the romantic prettiness of bad poetry about the Old South had somehow made it difficult for good poets to write about Old Southern society. Davidson, describing several years later (in 1926) the uncomfortable position of the artist in the South, unequivocally expressed his grudge against the sentimentalists, whether politicians or bad poets, who had appropriated and prostituted the materials of the Southern past. "The gallantries of the Lost Cause, the legends of a gracious aristocracy, the stalwart traditions of Southern history--these [the serious Southern artist] . . . may admire," said Davidson; "but," he remarked, "they come to him mouthed over and cheapened." Davidson did not repudiate the "legends of a gracious aristocracy";⁵² rather, he complained that widespread sentimentalizing

⁵¹ [Unsigned], "The Other Half of Verse," Fugitive, II (August-September, 1923), 99. An announcement on this page of the Fugitive suggests that Davidson and Tate, editors of the Fugitive at that time, are jointly responsible for "The Other Half of Verse."

⁵² Donald Davidson, "Artist as Southerner," Saturday Review of Literature, II (May 15, 1926), 782. Davidson also remarked on other groups with whom the serious Southern artist could find no intellectual companionship--the civic boosters, the Fundamentalists, and the Ku Klux Klan. The cries of the boosters (the avant-garde of industrialism) Davidson found even less attractive than the "treacly lamentations" of the "old school." The Fundamentalists, although from one point of view they might be seen as taking a stand for myth and poetry as against science, cramped the artist's style by assuming he was immoral if he read Sherwood Anderson. The Ku Klux Klan Davidson found uncongenial because it was unwilling for the artist to read the New Republic. Ibid., pp. 782, 783.

Davidson's own later celebration of the "stalwart traditions of Southern history" may be found in his poem "The Running of Streight (A Fragment of the Forrest Saga)" His own treacly celebration of the benevolent ex-slaveowner may be seen in his "Georgia Pastoral" entitled "Old Black Joe Comes Home." Donald Davidson, Lee in the Mountains and Other Poems (Boston, 1938), pp. 23-28.

over that aristocracy had made it difficult for the real artist to use those legends in his poetry.

Two of Tate's poems written shortly before the encounter with Harriet Monroe foreshadowed in symbolic form Tate's later prose assertions that memory of the Old South's "serious social and political beliefs"⁵³ has been sterilized in an ambiguous mixture of hard cash and romantic sentiment. In fact, it may be said of Tate--as Tate said of T. S. Eliot--that his early poems contained ideas which "anticipated" the "attitude" of his later prose statements.⁵⁴ In these two poems Tate was already investigating the qualities of mind which might prevent the modern man from really knowing the Southern past. The imagery of the poems implied that involvement in a materialistic society and romantic worship of the past might effectively combine to make the real past inaccessible.

The first of these poems, "Euthanasia," is an early version of what was later revised and published under the title "Elegy--Jefferson Davis: 1808-1889."⁵⁵ Although the version which appeared in the Double-Dealer of May, 1922, does not mention Jefferson Davis by name, its portrait of a man who in life walked "the dry gutters of the mind" is essentially the same as that of

⁵³ Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51.

⁵⁴ Tate made this comment on Eliot in a review of Eliot's Poems: 1909-1925. See Allen Tate, "A Poetry of Ideas," New Republic, XLVII (June 30, 1926), 172.

⁵⁵ "Euthanasia" was published in the Double-Dealer (New Orleans), III (May, 1922), 262. The revised version, "Elegy--Jefferson Davis: 1808-1889," appears on pp. 89-90 of Allen Tate's Poems: 1922-1947 (New York, 1948).

the tortured, neurotic figure whom Tate labels in the "Elegy." That "scented" and "corseted" laments for this gentlemen have somehow become coupled with a shallow materialism is implied in the following lines:

What did he gain? What did he lose?
Those questions for the pious dead
Are blown from bosoms of kind souls--
A scented sorrow, corseted.

High up above our busy heads
Busied with gullets gorging dimes,
We raise him to a grinning sky,
Shouting his praise a hundred times.⁵⁶

"The Screen"⁵⁷ is a second poem whose imagery implies that modern man's vision of the past may be blighted by his romantic sehnsucht and his imprisonment in a society attuned to cash values. A dramatic monologue, written somewhat in the manner of Eliot, it illuminates much of Tate's later work in both poetry

⁵⁶ Tate, "Euthanasia," Double-Dealer, III (May, 1922), 262.

⁵⁷ Allen Tate, "The Screen," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 70-71.

and prose.⁵⁸ "The Screen" is Tate's "Waste Land." The sense in which this statement is true may be suggested if we recall what Tate has said about that section of "The Waste Land" called "A Game of Chess."⁵⁹ Tate believes that the woman in "A Game of Chess" is the "symbol of man at the present time."⁶⁰ This woman,

⁵⁸ "Euthanasia," "The Screen," and "The Battle of Murfreesboro (1862-1922)"--the latter is another of Tate's early poems, published in the Fugitive, I (October, 1922), 84--all these poems look forward to Tate's much-praised "Ode to the Confederate Dead." The "Ode to the Confederate Dead" dates from about 1926, as Louis D. Rubin points out in his article "The Serpent in the Mulberry Bush," Hopkins Review, VI (Spring-Summer, 1953), 135; however, the poem achieved currency only in 1928 when it appeared in Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse and in Tate's Mr. Pope and Other Poems. One of the subjects with which Tate is preoccupied in "Euthanasia," "The Screen," "The Battle of Murfreesboro (1862-1922)," and the "Ode to the Confederate Dead" is the inaccessibility of the past--and specifically the Southern past. Cleanth Brooks (who does not discuss "Euthanasia," "The Screen," or "The Battle of Murfreesboro") calls this theme the "present non-existence" of the Old South. Brooks explains that "the Old South cannot exist in the mind of the modern Southerner apart from its nonexistence in the present." The sentimentalist, Brooks says, "can of course, dwell upon the Old South exclusively, giving a romantic construct which has no connection with the present and therefore no real connection with the actual South of the past"; but the "Southern poet who is unwilling to sentimentalize the past or to limit himself to objective descriptions of the local color of the present, must of necessity mediate his account of the Old South through a consciousness of the present; that is, of its [the Old South's] nonexistence." See Cleanth Brooks, "The Modern Poet and the Tradition," Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill, 1939), p. 75.

⁵⁹ T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," Collected Poems: 1909-1935 (New York, 1936), pp. 73-75. The first version of "The Waste Land" was published in the Criterion, I (October, 1922), 50-64. Tate mentions that "The Waste Land" had been published when he returned to Nashville in February, 1923 (his studies at Vanderbilt had been interrupted for reasons of health in the spring of 1922); upon his return to Nashville, he began (he says) "an impertinent campaign in Eliot's behalf in the South." See Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 80-81.

⁶⁰ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 301.

in her rich boudoir decorated with "scenes from an heroic past,"⁶¹ is (according to Tate) equivalent to the modern man who is "surrounded by the grandeurs of the past" but "does not participate in them" and is not "sustain[ed]" by them.⁶² The speaker in Tate's poem, "The Screen," records his own inability to participate in, or be sustained by, the past. For him, the past is dead, for he knows it only through a living-dead woman (vaguely identified with the New South) whose lips, "hammered on old medallions--/Mute souvenirs of time and war and beauty's vagrant cenotaphs," never quiver. In relation to the "ivory hand" he has "lived for," he sees himself as a "lonely customer"; and he knows that he is incapable of imagining the heroes and heroines of a golden age. He laments:

I shall not ever hold again
The rapture of their last night--

and he declares that that "stricken night" has been

. . . endlessly
Marted for pinnacles of stone,
Motors and steel, in Tennessee:
Where now the cat-like limousine
Purrs to the prinking Belle Meade grass
(Rouged with geraniums, slashed with rills),
Superior to the age of ruffles
In an age of jazz and chills . . . ⁶³

The implications of Tate's imagery here are that the story of the Old South (or of any heroic past) has been prostituted and that the South has literally sold out to a hard materialism. To the question "She is dead now?" ("she" appears to be, among other

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 299.

⁶² Ibid., p. 301.

⁶³ Tate, "The Screen," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 70, 71.

things, the "live corpse" of the Old South), the speaker can only reply that spring (which should be the season of rebirth) is "not happy now"--that the "uncharted wayward thirst" which may stir "lawns and terraces . . . to magnolia bloom again"⁶⁴ can never bring life to that which has become a mere commodity to be bought and sold.

In "The Screen," published in 1923, Tate had appeared to be preoccupied with the murder of the Old Southern tradition by twentieth-century cash-mindedness and romantic sentiment. Momentarily, in 1925, Tate seemed to be on the verge of repudiating the Old Southern aristocracy itself along with the defunct post-bellum literary tradition which paid saccharine tribute to it. His disgust with the poor literature (for example, Thomas Nelson Page's writings) eulogizing the ante-bellum aristocracy apparently led him to inspect ante-bellum literature. Then, in a mood of irritation with the shallowness of Old Southern belles-lettres, he made a social diagnosis of the Old South's literary ills. The Old South, he announced, "was strictly a political and economic aristocracy";⁶⁵ and "as the proprietor of a particular mechanism of truth," which it "had to protect against the removal of old parts and the fitting in of new," the Old South could only frown upon the "venturesome mind" (that is,

⁶⁴ Ibid. It is interesting to note that the epigraph to "The Screen" is from Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Haunted Palace," which Poe incorporated into his story "The Fall of the House of Usher."

⁶⁵ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

the serious writer).⁶⁶ It looked as if Tate was consigning the Old Southern social structure to damnation. In words which foreshadowed his later commiseration with Edgar Allan Poe, driven out of Virginia by aristocracy,⁶⁷ Tate concluded that "doubtless in the [Old] South," the "venturesome mind"--which "notoriously sets politics and economics to quaking"--was "an embarrassing Gorgon to be throttled or at least hidden away."⁶⁸ He even went so far as to present the Civil War under a rather ludicrous guise:

Mastered by its one idea and so master of none,
[the Old South] . . . fought four years--in a
fashion which a contemporaneous Cervantes, as
well as a Thomas Nelson Page, might have owned
to be his proper milieu--to preserve this single,
all-embracing idea. ⁶⁹

The Old South's hopes were centered "always in a secular order and made few requisitions of literature and religion--of Petronius and God," Tate declared. And he presented a picture of the Old Southern aristocracy as having scarcely any spiritual or moral superiority to the Southern Rotarian who might be his descendant:

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 268.

⁶⁸ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485. Richard M. Weaver presents a similar view of the Old South's inhospitability to the artist. See R. M. Weaver, "Scholars or Gentlemen?" College English, VII (November, 1945), 72-77. It is ironic that Tate and Weaver, who find so much to admire in the thought of Calhoun and other vigorous defenders of the slave-owning aristocracy, should note that the aristocracy's defence of its position precluded, in general, the existence of any but the most stereotyped and socially innocuous writers of fiction and poetry.

⁶⁹ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

it is not surprising that the second generation [descendants of the Old Southern aristocracy] after the Civil War is whooping it up in boosters' clubs along with the veritablest descendant of carpet-bagger and poor white. For this second generation, like its forebears, has no tradition of ideas, no consciousness of moral and spiritual values, as an inheritance; it has simply lost a prerogative based on property. 70

As we have already remarked,⁷¹ the satiric portions of "Last Days of the Charming Lady" looked like a damaging indictment of the Southern aristocracy. Indeed they were; yet Tate left himself two narrow avenues by which he could, in the future, escape from making any final condemnation of this class. In the first place, a few paragraphs after he had indicated the shallowness of the Old Southern gentlemen by saying that their "spiritual needs did not conspicuously exceed the supply of sentimental chivalry,"⁷² Tate turned around and paid the conventional tribute to the Virginian and South Carolinian aristocracies--a tribute scarcely distinguishable from Thomas Nelson Page's: "it is doubtful," Tate declared, "whether there have been other societies in the United States so distinguished for the graces of living as the two flourishing simultaneously in Charleston and in the counties of Virginia between Charlottesville and Washington from 1800 and 1850." Furthermore, in spite of his immediately preceding remarks about the aristocrats' lack of intelligence and and spirituality, Tate suddenly lamented that in failing to

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 485-486.

⁷¹ See Chapter I of this dissertation.

⁷² Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

"produce their Henry James," they had deprived posterity of the pleasure of reading the works of a "'historian of fine consciences' that had almost reached their maturity."⁷³ Thus, almost by sleight of hand, Tate succeeded in suggesting both that this aristocratic society produced no great literature because its aristocracy refused to examine itself intellectually and spiritually and also that this society's failure to produce a great literature was a tragedy because this aristocracy did consist of "fine consciences." The implication was that "fine consciences" could exist apart from spirituality. In spite of the fact that Tate had severely criticized the Old Southern aristocracy, he had left himself room to say, in the future, that rigid as the Old Southern aristocracy was, preoccupied as it was (to the exclusion of literary sensitivities) with the politics of maintaining its position,⁷⁴ it nevertheless had a way of life within which it was possible to act graciously and morally. If, as the "Last Days of the Charming Lady" stated, the aristocracy possessed no intellectual or spiritual complexity,⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., p. 486.

⁷⁴ For an expression of this idea, see Tate "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 271.

⁷⁵ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

it had, at least, a code.⁷⁶

Finally, in "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Tate indicated for the Southern writer a second avenue by which to avoid a total rejection of the Old Southern aristocracy. This avenue was a detour by way of foreign writing. The American writer, and particularly the Southern writer, might discover his "proper tradition . . . in an instrumental experience elsewhere," Tate said. He called attention to the fact that T. S. Eliot, Conrad Aiken, and John Gould Fletcher were "living permanently abroad," and he concluded with the following significant remark:

It is pretty certain that the Southern variety of American writer must first see himself, if at all, through other eyes. For he of all Americans is privy to the emotions founded in the state of knowing himself to be a foreigner at home. ⁷⁷

Three years and a half after he had written of the last days of the charming lady, Tate was busy attacking those who,

⁷⁶ Less than two years after the publication of "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Tate was advertising John Crowe Ransom as the latter-day voice of the aristocratic eighteenth-century South's "fine consciences." Tate announced that Ransom was "the last pure manifestation of the culture of the eighteenth-century South"; the "moral issues which emerge transfigured in [Ransom's] . . . poetry are the moral issues of his section, class, culture, referred to their simple, fundamental properties," Tate observed--in words which suggested that at last an artist had laid hold on the substance, as distinguished from the "moonlight-and-magnolias" or the surfaces, of a Southern tradition. The two qualities connecting Ransom's poetry with the "culture which in its prime registered its genius in politics and law" were, said Tate, "rationalism and the code of noblesse oblige." (By "rationalism," Tate said he intended to convey not the meaning the "philosophes" have given it but its "older and purer sense of the humane tradition, a tradition lying at the very core of the old Southern order.") See Allen Tate, "The Eighteenth-Century South" [review of Two Gentlemen in Bonds, by John Crowe Ransom], Nation, CXXIV (March 30, 1927), 346.

⁷⁷ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 486.

professing admiration of the Old South, had bestowed on her a kiss of death. In 1925, Tate had remarked that James B. Cabell in refurbishing the "supply" of "sentimental chivalry" had written comedies which were, in effect, "Southern elegiacs"--comedies whose "escape from realism" was "identical in origin with the historical [that is, the ante-bellum] Southern escape from ideas."⁷⁸ By 1929 and 1930, although he had not ceased his excoriation of modern sentimental Southern literature or second-rate ante-bellum literature,⁷⁹ Tate had definitely changed his emphasis: following a path suggested by the images in his early poems, "Euthanasia" and "The Screen,"⁸⁰ he now insisted that the Poictesme of James B. Cabell or the picturesque panorama (à la Hergesheimer) of old Southern heroes was a way of administering a death blow to the "serious social and political beliefs" of the Old South.⁸¹ "[I]t seems," Tate now said, "that Poictesme is not a way of escape into the Old South, but an escape from it into a world that Mr. Cabell both dislikes and needs: the fantasy of Poictesme will let one accept this world and go on believing that one has not accepted it."⁸² In a review of

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 485.

⁷⁹ In the period of his most violent Old Southernism, Tate continued to attack the "sentimental romantic school of Southern fiction . . . headed by Thomas Nelson Page." Allen Tate, "The Cornfield Journalist," New Republic, LXXI (August 3, 1932), 320. Tate's point is that writers of Page's ilk did not bring such great characters as Robert E. Lee alive; rather, these writers "embalm[ed]" such men as Lee in the "genteel defeatism of the Reconstruction generation." See Allen Tate, "The Definitive Lee," New Republic, LXXXI (December 19, 1934), 171.

⁸⁰ Tate, "Euthanasia," Double-Dealer, III (May, 1922), 262; Tate, "The Screen," Fugitive, II (June-July, 1923), 70-71.

⁸¹ Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51

⁸² Allen Tate, "Mr. Cabell's Farewell," New Republic, LXI (January 8, 1930), 202.

Joseph Hergesheimer's Swords and Roses, Tate made explicit his anger against the "peculiarly silly myth" which suggests that the Old South's cause was the cause of beauty--but that the beauty was "mistaken beauty." To make his point, Tate quoted from Hergesheimer's comparison of the Old and the New South:

"The improvement [of the New South] is actual; there are roads everywhere and railroads, schools back of the mountains and hospitals; poverty and ignorance and disease are diminished . . . But if there has been a great gain there was a loss. A loss of beauty.

"A curtain of smoke and fire was lowered upon the mistakes, and on the beauty, of the past."⁸³

Tate then made the following significant comment:

Although the South has accepted it, the myth of mistaken beauty has been generally the creation of a compensating northern romanticism, and it is silly because it dismisses, with the one word mistaken, the serious social and political beliefs of the South. Since beauty is a useless luxury, you can sigh over it and then confess that it is not made for this world. The political ambitions of the Old South no longer challenge the forces that overcame them, and the surface effects of southern life may be discreetly appreciated. It is possible to see the beginnings of this transformation of the Old South, into a safe Poictesme for the North, in the friendship that sprang up between L. Q. C. Lamar and Henry Adams. Adams at last found a Southerner who was intelligent; Lamar had come to believe that the South was wrong.⁸⁴

⁸³ Joseph Hergesheimer as quoted by Tate in Tate's "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51. The italics are Tate's.

⁸⁴ Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51. Cf. Tate's tart concluding remark (after a generally laudatory review) on Burton J. Hendrick's The Lees of Virginia: "He [Hendrick] believes that the history of the Lees forms a charming episode in a remote and, I presume, irrecoverably romantic past." Allen Tate, "The Galaxy of Lees," New Republic, LXXXV (January 1, 1936), 234. See also Tate's review of Addison Hibbard's The Lyric South: Allen Tate, "Mr. Hibbard and Colonel Telfair," New York Herald Tribune Books, September 16, 1928, p. 13.

In 1925 when he published "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Tate had stood at the crossing of two ways. He had been in a position to follow a God and to devote himself to probing the evils in the Old South's social structure and social beliefs. Aggravated by the Old South's "escape from ideas,"⁸⁵ he had been ready to attribute to the Old South itself--and specifically to its propertied "aristocracy"--a rigid self-centeredness preventing the growth and perpetuation of an adequate tradition of moral and spiritual ideas.⁸⁶ The attractiveness of the "high forms" of the Old Southern social life⁸⁷ won out, however; and although Tate has continued to lament the Old Southern aristocracy's cultivation of politics in lieu of a religion (or, more particularly, a non-Protestant religion)⁸⁸ and its unkindness to the literary artist,⁸⁹ he has maintained that the Old Southern society and its social ideas were, compared to those of the twentieth century, admirable.⁹⁰

How did Tate manage between 1925 and 1929 to find a passage to the Old South? Why, after laughing at the Old Southern aristocracy for their lack of intellectual adventurousness,⁹¹ did

⁸⁵ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 485, 486.

⁸⁷ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 270.

⁸⁸ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 168.

⁸⁹ Allen Tate, "The Lost Poet of Georgia," New Republic, LXIII (July 23, 1930), 294; Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 271, 276-277.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 275.

⁹¹ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

he decide to go adventuring among the Old Southern ideas? And how did he convince himself that he had pierced the veil of sentimentality and had laid hold upon the "serious social and political beliefs" of the Old South?⁹² One clue for the answering of these questions lies in his "instrumental experience"⁹³ of social ideas emanating from Europe. Apparently his way to the Old South has included some detours by way of conservative European and expatriate-American critics of capitalism and democracy. Early indications of his receptivity to these critics include his tendency to see a blight of money on human values, relationships, and perceptions in the twentieth century,⁹⁴ his revulsion against idealistic humanitarianism,⁹⁵ and his conviction (apparent in his literary criticism in 1925) that artistic standards are debased when literature is a commodity to be mass-

⁹² The phrase is taken from Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51.

⁹³ The phrase is taken from Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 486.

⁹⁴ For evidences of Tate's tendency to see cash-mindedness as the very image of evil, see the following early poems: Allen Tate, "Nuptials: To J. C. R.," Fugitive, I (December, 1922), 116-117; and Allen Tate, "Elegy for Eugenesis," Fugitive, I (October, 1922), 92.

⁹⁵ See Allen Tate, "The Persistent Illusion" [review of The World of Souls, by Wicenty Lutoslawski], Nation, CXIX (November 19, 1924), 549; and An Observer [Allen Tate], "Literary Criticism in America," New Republic, XLVII (July 28, 1926), 283.

produced and sold to the people.⁹⁶ We shall next observe some images and ideas, emanating in part from Europe, which have contributed to his mature evaluation of the Old South's social structure and social ideas.

III. THE ROAD BACK: EUROPEAN DETOURS TO THE OLD SOUTH

Behind the thought of Allen Tate lies a picture of medieval society. This picture of the Middle Ages--and of the persistence of some of its values through the medium of the country gentleman--has had a special, though often not very clearly defined, relation to Tate's picture of the Old South.⁹⁷ Tate is, to be

⁹⁶ In 1925, for instance, in a review of poetry by Irwin Edman and others, Tate remarked: "The criticism of poetry, seldom now more than an extension of reviewing, does not care to interfere with business, with commodities for trade." See n. 880 of Allen Tate, "Verse," Nation, CXXI (December 9, 1925). To glimpse Tate's youthful flaying of the Democracy--or the bourgeoisie--for their intellectual and aesthetic barbarism, see the following: Allen Tate, "Dear Mr. Hankel" [letter], Aesthete 1925, no. 1 (February, 1925), pp. 10-11; Allen Tate, [Review of Poets of America, ed. Clement Wood], Guardian, II (October, 1925), 463; and Allen Tate, [Review of The Independent Poetry Anthology, ed. E. Ralph Cheney], Guardian, II (October, 1925), 463. Donald Davidson was, at this time, much more charitable than Tate was in his comments on the reading public. The poet of today, Davidson said, "makes greater demands of his audience than ever before in the history of poetry; but the audience most surprisingly and readily adapts itself to his demands." Davidson was sure that "[g]ood poetry" was "fairly and quickly recognized." See D.[onald] D.[avidson], "The Future of Poetry," Fugitive, IV (December, 1925), 127.

⁹⁷ For examples of Tate's allusion to European feudal society, see especially the following articles: Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 166-169, 173; Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 275, 281; Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 731-744; Tate, "Jefferson Davis," pp. 301-302.

sure, not generally so doctrinaire in expressing his medievalism as is Andrew Nelson Lytle, who maintains that the "greater body" of the Europeans who migrated to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were "motivated" by a "discontent with the loss of feudal independence"⁹⁸ and that here in America they "set out to appease their nostalgia for feudalism."⁹⁹ Tate's expressions of fealty to the Middle Ages are more subtly expressed than Lytle's, but his medieval allegiances are none the less an essential part of his equipment for evaluating the Old South's social order. As we shall note in Chapters III and IV of this dissertation, these medieval allegiances tend to draw the thought of Tate and Lytle together, making them resemble each other more than either resembles Donald Davidson or Frank Lawrence Owsley.¹⁰⁰

When Tate said recently that the "possibility of the humane life presupposes, with us, a prior order, the order of a unified Christendom," he showed that he valued the Old South in proportion as it resembled the society of the Middle Ages, for he remarked

⁹⁸ Andrew N. Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (October, 1934), 631.

⁹⁹ Andrew N. Lytle, Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company (New York, 1931), p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Incidental remarks by Tate and Davidson suggest a marked difference between their attitudes toward the Middle Ages. Tate speaks almost enviously of the thirteenth-century French peasant's life. Davidson, in contrast, makes an analogy--uncomplimentary to the Middle Ages as well as to the present--between the medieval peasant (who, remote from the king, counted not at all in the government) and the twentieth-century small man (whose will counts not at all under the collectivistic policies of the Tennessee Valley Authority). See Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 742, 743; and Donald Davidson, The Tennessee, Vol. II: The New River--Civil War to TVA (New York, 1948), 333.

that the Old South was good insofar as it "perpetuated many of the virtues of such an order."¹⁰¹ Many--though not all--of the apparent inconsistencies in Tate's thought may be resolved if we keep in mind that he is measuring the Old South's social order against two other forms of society: the secular business civilization of twentieth-century America (as he sees it)¹⁰² and some ideal culture under unified religious authority. This latter ideal culture, we may gather from scattered comments in Tate's writings, strongly resembles his notion of a medieval feudal society under monarchy.¹⁰³ He is, of course, aware that neither the Old South nor the European feudal society, against which he measures the Old South, was perfect;¹⁰⁴ and he vigorously denies that he wishes to restore in any literal or mechanical fashion all the institutions of either.¹⁰⁵ But unless he means that these social orders provide touchstones helping us to detect

¹⁰¹ Tate, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 29.

¹⁰² See, for example, the following: Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 275; and Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

¹⁰³ See, for example, the honorific allusion to feudalism in Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 267. For praise of monarchy, see the following references: Ibid., pp. 274-275; and Allen Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 231-232.

¹⁰⁴ See Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 741.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; Tate, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 28-29; Tate, "Fascism and the Southern Agrarians," New Republic, LXXXVII (May 27, 1936), 75. Cf. Donald Davidson's statement that the Agrarians of I'll Take My Stand "proposed, not a literal reestablishment of older Southern principles and traditions, but a new application of these principles to the current situation." Davidson, "Regionalism in the Arts," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 93.

good and bad qualities in our own society, he has wasted a number of years in futile homage to the past.

Richard M. Weaver--whose book Ideas Have Consequences outdoes anything Tate has written in praise of the Middle Ages--schematizes a vision of the "traditional" society. His vision turns out to be remarkably similar to Tate's. Weaver (who emphasizes the importance of such contemporary extollers of the past as Oswald Spengler, William Butler Yeats, and T. S. Eliot)¹⁰⁶ reminds us that "traditional society was organized around king and priest, soldier and poet, peasant and artisan."¹⁰⁷ Medieval society (which Tate has implied may be taken as the "prototype of European tradition")¹⁰⁸ was superior to Renaissance society, according to Weaver, because the "philosophic doctor"--the theologian--was "in charge of the general synthesis" in the Middle Ages. "[S]ynthesis," says Weaver, involves "the reconciling of all interests"; the theologian could be appealed to "on matters of financial operation."¹⁰⁹ The theologian could, we may gather from Weaver's remarks, play a central role in a kingdom whose monarch (to use Tate's words) "in theory at any rate, and often in practice, . . . tried to balance class

¹⁰⁶ Richard M. Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences (Chicago, 1948), pp. 106, 162, 180. For information on Weaver and his ideas, see pp. 111n, 43, 113n, 203-206, 275n, and 305n of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁷ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 166.

¹⁰⁹ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 53, 54, 55.

interests under protection of the Crown."¹¹⁰ The chief glory of the society which followed the Middle Ages was, according to Weaver, the Renaissance gentleman. The gentleman, though he "had lost sight of the spiritual origin of self-discipline" and was thus inferior to the philosophic doctor, was "bred up" to idealism, self-restraint, and a vision of the whole society. Weaver notes that the "American South [prior to 1861] not only had cherished the ideal [of the gentleman] but had given it an infusion of fresh strength, partly through its social organization but largely through its education in rhetoric and law."¹¹¹ In Weaver's scheme, the gentleman is less desirable as guardian and guiding genius of the society than are the king and priest who were at the top of the medieval hierarchy.¹¹² But the gentleman is infinitely preferable to modern leaders. The mid-nineteenth century, unfortunately, substituted for the gentleman (to whom the Old Southern social order gave a belated brief nurture) a new type: "the popular leader and demagogue, the

¹¹⁰ This is Tate's characterization of British monarchy--apparently Tate is particularly willing to characterize British monarchy prior to Henry VIII in these favorable terms. See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 274.

¹¹¹ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 54-55. Very early in his career, reviewing Albert Jay Nock's biography of Thomas Jefferson, Tate alluded to the decay of political leaders since the gentleman left the political scene: "After reading Mr. Nock's study," Tate said, "one gets a little into his habit of classical quotation"; and Tate continued for the benefit of his audience (the readers of a magazine published by a department store): "The propriety of an Eheu fugaces, therefore, for the fact that nowadays politicians are never scholars and seldom gentlemen will not be too vigorously assailed." Allen Tate, "Some Poets and Two Biographies," Charm Magazine, VI (October, 1926), 66.

¹¹² Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 55.

typical foe of privilege, who broadened the franchise in England, wrought revolution on the Continent, and in the United States replaced the social order which the Founding Fathers had contemplated with demagogism and the urban political machine."¹¹³

In general, Tate has characterized the Old South as an "aristocracy."¹¹⁴ We have already noted that, long before Weaver developed the theme of the gentleman's losing sight "of the spiritual origin of self discipline,"¹¹⁵ Tate had emphasized the secular orientation of the Old Southern gentleman.¹¹⁶ However, the fact that Tate has sometimes criticized the Old South for having the defects of a secular aristocratic order may not safely be taken as evidence that his ideal is political democracy. Democracy "in its modern form"¹¹⁷ is apparently not very attractive to Tate. In fact, Tate says "plutocracy" is the proper name for the polity of the countries which are commonly called "democracies." Representative democracy in the contemporary world is (Tate has said) merely a "rationalization"¹¹⁸ for the

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 267.

¹¹⁵ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 54.

¹¹⁶ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486. When Tate is in the mood to castigate the Old South for the inadequacy of its religion, he calls its religion "Protestantism" and says Protestantism is, "in origin, a non-agrarian and trading religion; hardly a religion at all, but a result of secular ambition." Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 168. "Protestant" and "secular" seem to be terms that are closely akin in Tate's vocabulary.

¹¹⁷ The phrase is quoted from Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 232.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

power which in actuality is wielded by the rich men.

Tate makes clear his view of various forms of political power--as he thinks they actually function--in a review discussing Herbert Agar's book, The People's Choice. The purpose of The People's Choice, according to Tate, is "to depict the decline of the agrarian republic which dominated the country until the Civil War, and the rise of capitalist 'democracy' in which the popular vote is consistently manipulated for the benefit of the money power."¹¹⁹ Apparently Tate is willing to take the first two forms of power--monarchy and aristocracy--at something like the value they place on themselves. "In general," says Tate,

our civilization is acquainted with three types of power: monarchy, aristocracy, and plutocracy, these being the determinate forms of which politics like democracy are intermediate and incomplete stages. Under pure monarchy the aegis of power is religious; the king rests upon divine right; and he is therefore theoretically not a person, but the summation of the people and hence their protector. Under aristocracy the monarchy declines in favour of a special class, but if this class is a genuine aristocracy it will, in the interest of social order and its own tenure of rule, set limits to its exploitation of the people. The price that aristocracy pays for power is a high standard of public and private conduct that the masses can respect, and the diffusion through society of the materials of civilized living in sufficient quantity to bind all classes together in a single culture. ¹²⁰

The third form of power--the one we live under in the United States today--Tate is by no means willing to take in terms of its own representation of itself. He is careful to note that

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 231-232.

the genesis of this form of power--plutocracy--is to be found in the capitalist revolution begun by "Protestant bankers" in the "Hanseatic towns."¹²¹ Democracy is the mask of plutocracy--in other words, says Tate, democracy is the "rationalization of power that now sustains middle-class capitalism."¹²² At the time of the French Revolution, the

middle-class capitalists consolidate[d] their position; they discovered that, in order to break the power of monarchy and aristocracy, the allegiance of the people must be captured, and democracy in its modern form was invented. Western history since the French Revolution tends to prove that democracy is not a state, but an intermediate or transitional stage in politics from the older forms to capitalism. It is the general form of the capitalist rationalization of power, not only here [in the United States] but in Europe. 123

Contrasting the plutocracies (which claim to be democracies) with the aristocracies, Tate declares:

The remarkable feature of the modern plutocracies is their failure to pay a price for power. They neither seek nor achieve the respect of the people 124
[W]hereas a true aristocracy keeps power by earning public respect, industrial capitalism offers the people (when it is prosperous) a material bribe in the form of endless secondary commodities--that is, direct consumables; under the rationalization of "democracy" capitalism has tended to reduce the masses of the population to a state of abject economic dependence, which approaches servility. 125

Although he admits that all ruling classes--whether in a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy--try to put the "best

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 232.

¹²² Ibid., p. 231.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 232.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 234.

face on political power,"¹²⁶ Tate here singles out democracy, which he says is, in the modern world, no more nor less than plutocracy, for his ultimate condemnation as a form of government which has in no wise lived up to the promises of its ruling class.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 231.

¹²⁷ See p. 145 of this dissertation for a statement (apparently hyperbolic) by Tate, suggesting that Fascism or Communism might be preferable to the plutocratic democracy under which America lived in 1938. That Tate, violent though his criticism of plutocratic democracy was, did not actually desire a Fascist or Communist dictatorship is indicated, however, by his announcements of his opinions in 1936 on the presidential campaign and in 1939 on the issue of our entrance into the war. In 1936 Tate announced: "I shall vote for Roosevelt. I am not ready to vote for any of the radical parties simply because I don't believe that American democracy is quite done for; if it has any chance to survive, it will be in the next four years under Roosevelt. There are very few of the President's policies that I like, but he has been aware that a crisis exists, and there is at least a strong probability that he will take firmer and more coherent ground, in his second administration, against privilege and Big Business. Should Landon be elected he would certainly bring on a revolution of violence in his effort to restore the good old days of finance-capitalism. If I were a Communist, I think I should vote for Landon." See Allen Tate, "How They Are Voting" New Republic, LXXXVIII (October 21, 1936), 304-305. In 1939, Tate felt that we should stay out of the European conflict even at the cost of sacrificing our foreign trade. But he said it was "fantastic" to think we would actually follow such a policy. The effect upon our political economy if we entered the war, Tate outlined as follows: "Even if we destroy Hitler and Mussolini, the result will be permanent dictatorship here because monopoly capitalism is so shaky that after a war it could not reorganize as a 'democracy.' The Fascist-Marxist dilemma seems to me false; the question for us is, Shall we stay out of war and try to make some sort of capitalism work, or go into war and come out with dictatorship? Fascists ought to like the coming war. It is a mystery why the orthodox Communists want it: it will liquidate them in America." Allen Tate, "America and the Next War," New Republic, XCIV (June 14, 1939), 148. The liberal would probably say of these statements that Tate can make very astute remarks when he keeps his eyes focussed upon the present. If he acquaints himself with Tate's image of the Old South and the Middle Ages, the liberal will not be tempted to think that he can approve all of Tate's positive notions about the kind of society which would be better than twentieth-century democracy.

Tate's contempt for bourgeois democracy is a European element in his standard for praising and criticizing the Old South. The picture which Tate gives of the rise of democracy and its character in the modern world is of course by no means unique. When we consider the expatriate Americans and the European writers--for example, T. S. Eliot, John Gould Fletcher, Charles Maurras, Oswald Spengler, and Hilaire Belloc--who, admiring past societies, have condemned modern democracy, we may well speculate as to how "Southern" in origin is Tate's conviction that the good points of the Old South's social order are precisely those respects in which it resembled his idealized image of older European society. There are, of course, nineteenth-century American analogues to Tate's curse on the plutocratic democracy which he apparently feels can be traced back to the work of the Protestant bankers who turned their backs on the Middle Ages. George Fitzhugh, a Southerner, furnishes one of these analogues;¹²⁸ and Orestes Brownson, after his conversion

¹²⁸ According to Harvey Wish, Fitzhugh deprecated the Reformation and espoused "an almost canonical interpretation of interest-making." See Harvey Wish, George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1943), pp. 185, 177. Wish quotes Fitzhugh's praise of feudalism. Under that system, according to Fitzhugh, "every man in England had his appropriate situation and duties, and a mutual and adequate interest in the soil." Ibid., p. 186.

to Catholicism, supplies another.¹²⁹ Tate has professed an acquaintance with Fitzhugh's thought: Fitzhugh was, Tate has remarked, among the Old Southern thinkers who issued a "warning to the 'American system' that is still valid today."¹³⁰ But long before Tate had acknowledged, in his published writings, any awareness of George Fitzhugh, he was reading modern European and expatriate-American despisers of contemporary democracy and the middle class¹³¹--writers who believed that monarchy or feudalism, or both, fostered a more satisfactory relationship between the various social classes than nineteenth- or twentieth-century democracy has tried to create.

Tate says he started reading Eliot in May of 1922.¹³² Since then, he has (by his own avowal) been trying to learn everything

¹²⁹ According to a recent critic, Brownson held that the flourishing types in the social order which sprang from the Reformation were the urban proletariat and a commercial oligarchy. Brownson believed that democracy destroys land-owning aristocracies and substitutes "'an aristocracy founded on business capacity and capital or credit.'" Orestes Brownson, Works, ed. Henry F. Brownson (Detroit, 1882-1907), XVIII, 233-234, as paraphrased and quoted by Carl F. Krummel, "Catholicism, Americanism, Democracy and Orestes Brownson," American Quarterly, VI (Spring, 1954), 26-27.

¹³⁰ Allen Tate, "The Prophet of Secession," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 26.

¹³¹ Tate's definition of the middle class is as follows: "that class which, producing nothing, buys cheap and sells dear, getting a rake-off from both producer and consumer; the Morgans, for example, being middle-class, regardless of their wealth and power." Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 416-417.

¹³² Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 81.

he could use from the Dean of Anglo-American Letters.¹³³ In 1923, he published a defence of Eliot's method in "The Waste Land"--the method whereby fragments from a heroic past are made to comment ironically on the spiritual desert of the present.¹³⁴ By 1926, he appeared to be less sanguine about Eliot's future development as a poet,¹³⁵ but he had only admiration for Eliot's editorship of the Criterion--a magazine which, said Tate, was "an effort toward an ordering of the modern spirit."¹³⁶ As early as April, 1924, Tate expressed familiarity with one of Spengler's ideas;¹³⁷ and by 1926, which is the pivotal moment so far as his espousal of the Old Southern cause is concerned, he was referring, in an offhand manner, to the works of Spengler and Charles Maurras as "attest [ing] to the reality of European disorder."¹³⁸ The latter part of 1925 and the whole of 1926,

¹³³ Allen Tate, "Homage to T. S. Eliot," Harvard Advocate, CXXV (December, 1938), 41. Tate's reference is doubtless chiefly to the poetry of Eliot, but he can hardly have failed to react sympathetically to Eliot's conservative social ideas in regard to democracy and the middle class.

¹³⁴ Allen Tate, "Waste Lands," Literary Review of the New York Evening Post, III (August 4, 1923), 886.

¹³⁵ Tate suggested that the paucity of Eliot's production in poetry and a possible future "petering out" of his poetic gift might be a result of his increasingly "intellectualized" attitude toward the "spiritual disorder" of Western culture. Tate, "A Poetry of Ideas," New Republic, XLVII (June 30, 1926), 172.

¹³⁶ [Allen Tate], [Editorial on The Criterion], Nation, CXXIII (September 22, 1926), 259.

¹³⁷ A. [llen] T. [ate], "One Escape from the Dilemma," Fugitive, III (April, 1924), 36.

¹³⁸ Tate, "A Poetry of Ideas," New Republic, XLVII (June 30, 1926), 172. Other writers whom Tate mentions are Paul Valéry and Henri Massis. See also Tate's review of Volume I of the English translation of Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West: Allen Tate, "Fundamentalism," Nation, CXXII (May 12, 1926), 532, 534.

while Tate was in New York and had access to the intellectual wares of the tired Old World, seem to have been a crucial time in the focussing of his anger against contemporary society's mixture of democracy and money.

Eliot, Fletcher, Maurras, and Spengler--however different they may be in other respects--identify modern democracy with plutocracy and view monarchy (or its equivalent) and a class society as preferable to what they appear to think is the democratic amalgam of money, chaos, and tyranny. Eliot, we may recall, announced in 1924 the probable demise of the democratic mind in the twentieth century. Commenting on T. E. Hulme's Speculations, Eliot declared:

[Hulme] appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the twentieth-century mind, if the twentieth century is to have a mind of its own. Hulme is classical, reactionary, and revolutionary; he is the antipodes of the eclectic, tolerant, and democratic mind of the end of the last century. 139

(Charles Maurras, the violent critic of democracy,¹⁴⁰ was listed by Eliot as one writer with whose mentality Hulme's attitude had "closest affinities.")¹⁴¹ As Tate read the Criterion in the 1920's, he was doubtless exposed, not only to Eliot's tearless

¹³⁹ Crites [T. S. Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, II (April, 1924), 231.

¹⁴⁰ See pp. 78-80 of this dissertation.

¹⁴¹ Crites [Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, II (April, 1924), 231. Eliot's own interested comment upon Maurras's ideas may be found in the following articles: [T. S. Eliot], "The Action Française: Mr. Maurras and Mr. Ward," Criterion, VII (March, 1928), 195-203; T. S. Eliot, "L'Action Française: A Reply to Mr. Ward," Criterion, VII (June, 1928), 84-90.

announcement of the probable death of the democratic mind, but also to Eliot's dialogue, "On the Eve," which probed possible relations between the plutocracy and democratic chaos. In this dialogue, a character who appeared to be a decayed aristocrat delivered himself of acid reflections upon the moneyed middle class and upon the "'democracy'" which they had "'extended to the utmost'" and which was now "'on the point of deposing them in favour of a new oligarchy stronger and more terrible than their own.'"¹⁴² At the moment when Tate's defense of Old Southern conservatism was taking shape (1926 and 1927),¹⁴³ he doubtless also read in the Criterion--the magazine which he called an "effort toward an ordering of the modern spirit"¹⁴⁴--such items as Eliot's wry aside on demagoguery and universal

¹⁴² T. S. Eliot, "On the Eve: A Dialogue," Criterion, III (January, 1925), 279-280.

¹⁴³ See pp. 52_n, 58_n, and 186_n of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁴ [Tate], [Editorial on The Criterion], Nation, CXXIII (September 22, 1926), 259.

Among the later documents relevant to the rapport or resemblance between the ideas of Eliot and those of one or more of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists are the following: Allen Tate, [Correspondence], Hound and Horn, IV (October-December, 1930), 117; [T. S. Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, X (April, 1931), 483-485; T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Orthodoxy," American Review, II (March, 1934), 513, 515, or T. S. Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (New York, 1934), pp. 15-18; T. S. E.[liot], "A Commentary," Criterion, LXX (October, 1938), 60; and T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (New York, 1949), pp. 47, 85, 102, 106-108. Any person already familiar with Allen Tate's and Andrew N. Lytle's views, or any person who reads this dissertation, will see the similarities between Tate's and Lytle's social ideas and some of Eliot's ideas in Notes Towards the Definition of Culture.

suffrage¹⁴⁵ and John Gould Fletcher's petulant comment on democratic "superstitions." Of the superstitions which have "captured the West, not only since the Reformation, but still more since the advent of materialistic science in the late eighteenth century," the greatest, said Fletcher, is "the superstition that political democracy leads to unlimited progress, the belief that to vote and pay taxes is to be free, while to take part in the common effort and danger and to help create the common spiritual heritage, is to be a slave."¹⁴⁶

Perhaps even more stimulating to Tate than the expatriate and Europeanized Americans, T. S. Eliot and John Gould Fletcher, were Charles Maurras and Oswald Spengler--at least insofar as their strictures on democracy and the plutocracy are concerned. (Tate has dissociated himself from the determinism and the

¹⁴⁵ [T. S. Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, V (May, 1927), 190. My impression of Eliot's views in the Criterion is based upon a reading of all of his identifiable writings therein--a reading undertaken, not in connection with this dissertation, but in connection with a study (in 1946) of Eliot's ideas about the relation of literature to social doctrines.

¹⁴⁶ John Gould Fletcher [Correspondence], Criterion, IV (October, 1926), 746-747. It is amusing to note that one of Fletcher's later attacks on democratic myth was provoked by his feeling that John Crowe Ransom had emphasized unduly the sanction which popular acceptance gives to a religious myth. Myths gain nothing, in Fletcher's opinion, from being accepted by the people. For example, he says, the democratic myth, the "doctrine of the General Will"--that is, the doctrine that "governments exist by the consent of the governed"--is popularly believed; but the myth is nevertheless a poor one. Fletcher is enabled to remark, in a most unlikely place, that "the system of representational democracy which Locke and Rousseau upheld . . . unquestionably functions extremely badly in most countries, and in some countries cannot be made to function at all." See John Gould Fletcher, [Review of God Without Thunder, by John Crowe Ransom], Criterion, XI (October, 1931), 130.

"jingoism" of Spengler,¹⁴⁷ and there is no reason to think Tate suffers from anti-Semitism or certain other diseases with which Maurras was afflicted.)¹⁴⁸

First, a glance at the similarity between Maurras's view of democracy and Tate's view. Tate's idea that democracy is the instrument of the middle class or capitalists for dominating the rest of the people¹⁴⁹ is paralleled, with anti-Semitic trappings added, in Maurras's Enquête sur la monarchie, of which a definitive edition was published in 1924. Maurras pictured democracy in France as a mask for a Jewish-Protestant gang of plutocrats who were the real ruling class. According to William Curt Buthman, who has studied the movement which culminated in Maurras's control of L'Action Française, Maurras was declaring

¹⁴⁷ For allusions to Spengler's determinism, see the following: Allen Tate, "The Twin Monsters," New Republic, LXII (March 19, 1930), 132; and Tate, "Spengler's Tract against Liberalism," American Review, III (April, 1934), 47. For evidence of Tate's effort to "disentangle the truth of Spengler's diagnosis of the needs of modern civilization from the bellicose pro-Germanism of his point of view," see ibid., pp. 41-47. Tate seemed to sympathize thoroughly with Spengler's attack on liberal democracy. (Ibid.) In view of the way in which Tate helped to give currency to Spengler's attack, it is amusing to find Tate making such a statement as the following about the current confusion of Western Christian civilization as it confronts Communism: "Some of our intellectual confusion comes of the part we have consented to play in the historical melodrama foisted upon the twentieth century by Spengler and Toynbee, who have pitted East against West in a relativist fantasy of equal civilizations equally doomed." Allen Tate, "Christ and the Unicorn," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Spring, 1955), 180.

¹⁴⁸ For evidence of Tate's abhorrence of anti-Semitism, see the following: Allen Tate, "The Question of the Pound Award," Partisan Review, XVI (May, 1949), 520; Allen Tate, "Ezra Pound and the Bollingen Prize," The Forlorn Demon: Didactic and Critical Essays (Chicago, 1953), pp. 156-160.

¹⁴⁹ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, I (December, 1933), 232.

as early as 1904 and continued to reiterate in the compendium, Enquête sur la monarchie, that "popular sovereignty is really a fiction" and that "[e]lections, parliament, political parties, and the administrative system, all the paraphernalia and trappings of this so-called democracy, are but the instruments by which this irresponsible group of conquering thieves first seized control of the government and now perpetuates that control."¹⁵⁰ Except for the fact that Tate traces back to Protestant bankers in the Hanseatic towns the affliction which capitalists of all descriptions continue to visit on contemporary society, whereas Maurras identifies plutocratic tyranny with contemporary Protestant and Jewish capitalists, Tate's and Maurras's invidious accounts of the origin and workings of democracy are similar. Maurras's positive argument for monarchy in France in the twentieth century is not, of course, paralleled in Tate's writings.¹⁵¹ Tate's comments on the principle of monarchy are limited to general praise;¹⁵² they do not recommend the setting up of a monarchy here and now.

¹⁵⁰ Summary of Charles Maurras's ideas, as given by William Curt Buthman, The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France (New York, 1939), pp. 278-279.

¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note, however, that Maurras's conservatism includes a belief that decentralization is "the only antidote to the supremacy of numbers" (a doctrine which is reminiscent of John C. Calhoun) and that "only under a monarchy" can "what we [the Americans] would call State Rights . . . thrive." See Arnold Whitridge, "Charles Maurras," North American Review, CCXXIII (June, 1926), 339, 338. See, also, the remarks of M. André Buffet as recorded in Charles Maurras, Enquête sur la monarchie, suivie de Une campagne royaliste au "Figaro" et Si le coup de force est possible (Paris, 1925), pp. 50-51. One wonders whether Tate met the doctrine of decentralization in Maurras's writings before he read Calhoun's works attacking the rule of numbers.

¹⁵² See pp. 69 and 163 of this dissertation.

One additional--and amusing--coincidence between the writings of Tate and those of Maurras is the fact that both Tate and Maurras quote with great solemnity from the same famous anti-egalitarian passage in Edgar Allan Poe's "Colloquy of Monos and Una." Maurras, assuming that the idea of democracy--because it contains the absurd idea of human equality--is absolutely irreconcilable with any sound social organization, declares:

En fait, en droit, l'organisation suppose des différences, des classements, un hiérarchie; elle répond à "la voix haute et salutaire des lois de gradation qui pénètrent si vivement toutes choses sur la terre and dans le ciel." La démocratie a pour essence de renier et de négliger ces lois éternelles. 153

Tate in quoting from Poe's "Colloquy of Monos and Una" has a larger purpose than does Maurras, and he quotes at much greater length. Monos' description of the conditions which preceded the end of the world includes three major elements: an expansion of the scientific intellect at the expense of the "'taste'"; the growth of industrial cities; and the spread of "'odd ideas,'" such as that of "'universal equality'".¹⁵⁴ For our purposes, the interesting point is that "'universal equality'" is labelled as a ridiculous flying in the face of "'analogy and of God'" and a foolish contradiction of "'the laws of gradation [sic] so visibly pervading all things.'"¹⁵⁵ Monos adds that "'wild attempts at

¹⁵³ Maurras, Enquête sur la monarchie, pp. 332-333. The passage quoted by Maurras is from Edgar Allan Poe's "Colloquy of Monos and Una."

¹⁵⁴ I paraphrase here the passage which Tate quotes from Poe's "Colloquy of Monos and Una." See Tate, "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God," Forlorn Demon, pp. 64-65.

¹⁵⁵ Poe's "Colloquy of Monos and Una," as quoted in Tate, ibid., p. 65.

an omnipresent Democracy were made'" as the end of the world grew near, attempts which "sprang necessarily from the leading evil--knowledge."¹⁵⁶ Tate has only contempt for those who would comment on this passage that "Poe was a reactionary Southerner who disliked democracy and industrialism." The whole passage, Tate insists, "adumbrates a philosophy of impressive extent and depth."¹⁵⁷ Apparently Tate is quite willing to tolerate, if not to admire, Poe's revulsion against egalitarianism.

Tate's antipathy toward "Protestant bankers" who "succeeded in establishing as truth the fiction that money is a commodity,"¹⁵⁸ and toward the capitalist class generally for originating democracy and using it for their own ends, is paralleled by Spengler's account of the rise and operation of democracy. According to Spengler, "Democracy is the completed equating of money with political power."¹⁵⁹ Democracy is, in Spengler's eyes, the instrument of the Third Estate, the townsman, and arises from the bourgeoisie's "resistance to the 'feudal' powers of blood and tradition."¹⁶⁰ Spengler, like Tate, identifies

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. See Edgar Allan Poe, "The Colloquy of Monos and Una," The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe with Selections from His Critical Writings, ed. Arthur H. Quinn and Edward H. O'Neill (New York, 1946), I, 359-360.

¹⁵⁸ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 232.

¹⁵⁹ Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, Vol. II: Perspectives of World-History, tr. Charles F. Atkinson (New York, 1928), p. 485.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 96. For passages suggesting that Tate views the late sectional struggle as an act in the drama of conflict between the middle class and the feudal-agrarian aristocracies, see pp. 301-302 of Tate's Jefferson Davis. See, also, Chapter IV of this dissertation.

democracy with plutocracy. "If by 'democracy' we mean the form which the Third Estate as such wishes to impart to public life as a whole, it must be concluded that democracy and plutocracy are the same thing under the two aspects of wish and actuality, theory and practice, knowing and doing," Spengler declares. In controversion of the delusions of the "world-improvers" and "freedom-teachers," the "principles of equality for all, natural rights, and universal suffrage" merely prepare society for the rule of numbers by money. Spengler explains this contention in the following words:

in actuality the freedom of public opinion involves the preparation of public opinion, which costs money; and the freedom of the press brings with it the question of the possession of the press, which again is a matter of money; and with the franchise comes electioneering, in which he who pays the piper calls the tune. The representatives of the ideas look at one side only, while the representatives of money operate with the other. 161

One rather mechanical index of the effect of Spengler on Tate is his echoing of Spengler's contempt for that creation of the bourgeoisie--the "Megalopolis."¹⁶² In 1927, Tate began to use the terms "megalopolis" and "megalopolitan" as terms of disparagement.¹⁶³

The corollary of Spengler's hatred of the bourgeoisie with

¹⁶¹ Spengler, Decline, II, 401-402.

¹⁶² See the index of both volumes of Spengler's Decline. Most of the references to the "megalopolis" are invidious.

¹⁶³ See the following references for examples of the invidious use of the terms "megalopolis" or "megalopolitan": Allen Tate, "Poet of Intricate Conceits," The Nation, CXXIV (April 27, 1927), 483; and Tate, "Distinguished Regression," New Masses, III (September, 1927), 31.

its "liberal science" and its absorption in the "absolute idea of money"¹⁶⁴ is his love of the peasantry¹⁶⁵ and his admiration of its "highest form," the "landed gentry."¹⁶⁶ Here again we may suspect that Tate was favorably impressed, in the late twenties, by Spenglerian ideas. The "people," in whose name the Third Estate carry on democracy, are, according to Spengler, the "city-people, an inorganic mass, something fluctuating." The peasant, Spengler emphasizes, "is not democratic--this . . . being a notion belonging to mechanical and urban culture."¹⁶⁷ Tate's avowal of love for the peasantry may have one of its roots in Spengler's notion that "[i]n all high cultures . . . there is a peasantry, which is breed, stock, in the broad sense (and thus to a certain extent nature herself), and a society which is assertively and emphatically 'in form.'"¹⁶⁸ Tate admires the Old South for its "high forms"--the "assimilating structure of society";¹⁶⁹ and he regrets that the Old South was

¹⁶⁴ Spengler, Decline, II, 97.

¹⁶⁵ It is significant that Charles Maurras's Action Française also professed an especial concern with peasants and other agricultural interests. According to André Buffet, whose vision of France under a revived monarchy Maurras quotes with evident approval, "'La terre française se fixera dans des familles bien enracinées au sol.'" Maurras, Enquête sur la monarchie, pp. 55-56.

¹⁶⁶ Oswald Spengler, "Downfall of Western Civilization," tr. Kenneth Burke, Dial, LXXVII (December, 1924), 499.

¹⁶⁷ Spengler, The Decline of the West, Vol. I: Form and Actuality, tr. Charles F. Atkinson (New York, 1926), p. 354.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., II, 331.

¹⁶⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 270.

rooted, not in a true peasantry (similar to the gentry in racial or cultural heritage), but in a group consisting of the "too different, too alien" Negroes--a group from whom, so far as culture was concerned, the "white man got nothing . . . , no profound image of himself in terms of the soil."¹⁷⁰ In Spengler, perhaps, as well as in such writings as Hilaire Belloc's "The Restoration of Property,"¹⁷¹ are to be found some of the emotional sources of Tate's remarks that "[a]ll great cultures have been rooted in peasantries, in free peasantries . . . such as the English yeomanry before the fourteenth century" and that the "peasant is the soil."¹⁷²

The measure of Tate's return to the Middle Ages can perhaps finally be indicated by his admission (in 1936) that "with reservations," he "look[s] at English history with Hilaire Belloc . . . as the decline of moral standards and human liberty from the twelfth century to our day."¹⁷³ In view of Tate's

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁷¹ Hilaire Belloc, "The Restoration of Property: The Essential Principles," American Review, II (November, 1933), 46-57.

¹⁷² Tate, "On the Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 272, 273. In his review of Spengler's The Hour of Decision, Tate summarizes, in the following terms, the view of the peasantry which Spengler had developed in The Decline of the West: "The peasantry, being anonymous, is eternal, vegetative and undifferentiated, rooted in nature, the source of the high styles of culture." Tate, "Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism," American Review, III, (April, 1934), 42.

¹⁷³ Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 737. As a matter of fact, Belloc designates the thirteenth century, rather than the twelfth century, as the "socially . . . glorious" century, though he does say that politically the thirteenth century was "one long tale of revolution and weakness." Hilaire Belloc, A History of England, II, (London, 1927), 266.

admiration for Belloc's record of the retrogression in liberty and moral standards in England since the twelfth century, it behooves us finally to raise questions as to how Belloc's picture of the Middle Ages may bear upon Tate's appraisal of the Old South.

But first we must summarize Tate's abstract theory about the relation of property to moral standards and human liberty--a theory which owes something to Hilaire Belloc's thought. The chief texts for our study of Tate's elaboration of this theory are to be found in three of Tate's essays. One of these essays is "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism"--from which we have just quoted Tate's praise of Belloc. In this essay, Tate uses a medieval French plowman to illustrate the life which possesses "moral unity."¹⁷⁴ In a second essay, entitled "What Is a Traditional Society?", the owner of a Georgian mansion in the Old South serves as Tate's example of the man whose way of making a living is reconcilable with the development and perpetuation of a moral code.¹⁷⁵ The third essay, "Notes on Liberty and Property," aims chiefly to show that a unity between morals and economic behavior is impossible in the present age of finance-capitalism.¹⁷⁶ Expressed in Tate's theory are two major contentions which bear upon our study of Tate's ideas about social and

¹⁷⁴ Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 742, 743.

¹⁷⁵ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 302-303. This essay was first published in the American Review in September, 1936.

¹⁷⁶ Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 80-93.

economic classes. The first contention is that a "man or a social group" is "possessed of liberty" to the extent to which the man or group "controls the property by which its welfare is insured."¹⁷⁷ Even more important than the freedom to sell property is the freedom to use property directly to feed and clothe oneself: the "degree of use-value than any society retains is the degree of its approach to liberty,"¹⁷⁸ Tate maintains; and he insists that a "true property system will be composed of a large proportion of owners whose property is not to be expressed solely in terms of exchange-value, but retains, for the owner, the possibility of use-value."¹⁷⁹ Tate's second main contention about property has to do with moral standards: he says that only the society which is "based upon property"--property effectively controlled by the individual owner¹⁸⁰--makes possible the development of a code by which men may act "humanly [sic] . . . towards the material basis of life and towards one another."¹⁸¹ This latter idea, which, according to John Lincoln Stewart, Tate got from Hilaire Belloc and other English Distributists,¹⁸² is developed in some detail in the following passage from "A

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

¹⁸⁰ Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 739.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 740.

¹⁸² Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," p. 352. The best-known and most influential of the Distributists were Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton.

Traditionist Looks at Liberalism":

A traditional society is based upon property, and property means not only ownership but control; not only economic privilege but moral obligation; not only rights but duties; not only material welfare but moral standards. And property means all this because the joint fact of ownership-control resides in the human character and is commensurate with human character. Finance-capitalism is ownership apart from human character because it is ownership apart from control; moral agency becomes, under the new system, economic purpose, and we get, in place of Christian or moral man, Economic Man, a living abstraction who is necessarily abstract, being the mere expression of another abstraction--Economic Productiveness. The Economic Man is controlled by his system of production; the man of property controls his system of production. 183

Apparently Tate thinks that the property which one inherits and personally controls is the basis of one's moral code, for he continues:

A society based upon property will pass on its heritage in a concrete form, and this concrete form, property, which means moral control of the means of life, is the medium in which tradition is passed on. The traditional society will envisage its heritage in moral terms because its members must be personally responsible for the material basis of life. A society personally responsible for the material basis of life is a traditional society. Such a society is any community of men who pass to the next generation, under a definite conception of human nature, a code of conduct; and this code of conduct, apart from its function, is a symbol of the excess of attention and love which is art and religion--a proof that men have mastered not only a productive process but themselves as well. They are able to act humanly and not merely economically, towards the material basis of life and towards one another. 184

Tate passes a severe judgment on contemporary society, in which

183 Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 739.

184 Ibid., p. 740.

corporate ownership is prevalent: "Having rejected a social and economic structure that makes possible free decision in the moral sense, we live in a system of money references that the moral will cannot control." The inaccessibility of any moral standards which could inform our economic life is due, Tate implies, to the fact that "for the institution of controlled property we have substituted finance-capitalism."¹⁸⁵ Tate contrasts our society with past traditional societies:

In our own un-traditional society there is a vast hiatus between the successful operation of the "means of production" and a coherent moral standard. Individuals here and there maintain standards. But there is no code of conduct, no mature articulation of the code in religion, that is commensurate with the economic process. A traditional society not only makes possible, but actually enjoins, the affirmation of a high code that permeates every implication of public and private experience. The economic process thus looked upon as a medium is, precisely as paint and canvas are to the artist, the medium of the moral conduct of man.

A society dominated by its economics is bound to be composed chiefly of men, whether workers or capitalists, to whom "making a living" and a "way of life" are quite different pursuits. Both workers and capitalists are operating the means of production without controlling it. The capitalist class seeks a realm of moral choice apart from its livelihood--and we get American culture today, a meaningless collection of other peoples' arts and morals, meaningless because irrelevant to the material basis of life. But the traditional community is made up of men who are never quite making their living and who never quite cease to make it: they are making their living all the time and affirming their code all the time. In societies dominated by the moral and religious view, the life of man and their livelihood approximate a unity in which to speak of the one is to speak of the other. ¹⁸⁶

Having summarized Tate's ideas on the relation of property,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 739.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 740.

to liberty and to moral standards, we shall examine Belloc's ideas on how the distribution of property relates to stability and freedom in the state. Belloc's summary of the meaning of English history appears in the short work entitled The Servile State.¹⁸⁷ According to Tate, this "neglected book" showed, "[a]s early as 1911," that "inherent in our pseudo-democratic intellectual tradition, buttressed by monopoly capitalism," is a "revolution" which will not "proceed towards social justice" but will, instead, "achieve the slave state."¹⁸⁸ Belloc's contention--buttressed by a backward glance at European history and a short analysis of English history--is that the only two kinds of stable states are the Distributive State and the Slave State.¹⁸⁹ By the term "Distributive State," he means the society whose ideal is that the family should have the use of some productive property for which it is personally responsible.¹⁹⁰ By the term "Slave State" or "Servile State," Belloc says he means

[t]hat arrangement of society in which so considerable a number of the families and individuals

¹⁸⁷ Hilaire Belloc, The Servile State (London, 1912).

¹⁸⁸ Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 6. This essay was first published in 1940, in the Southern Review. At that time, Tate characterized Belloc (parenthetically) as a "romantic medievalist." See Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," Southern Review, VI (Autumn, 1940), 238. Tate struck out the phrase when he republished the essay in On the Limits of Poetry. Whether or not Tate meant that he had changed his mind about Belloc's being romantic in his approach to the Middle Ages, we are entitled to suspect that Tate's own approach to medieval society may be slightly romantic.

¹⁸⁹ Belloc, The Servile State, pp. 97, 116, et passim.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 49-52.

are constrained by positive law to labour for the advantage of other families and individuals as to stamp the whole community with the mark of such labour. 191

The Capitalist State is, by definition, "in unstable equilibrium," according to Belloc. In the Capitalist State, says Belloc, control of the means of production is "vested in the hands of the few, while political freedom is the appanage of all."¹⁹² The experience of Western Christendom has been, says Belloc, that when property in land is not widely distributed, "among free men at any rate," society will grow "troubled and that unnatural state of affairs, the presence of men politically free but economically unfree" will produce "dangerous strains resulting sometimes in a violent transformation of society."¹⁹³ "To solve Capitalism," Belloc concludes, "you must get rid of restricted ownership, or of freedom, or of both."¹⁹⁴

The instability of the Capitalist State "breeds a Collectivist theory," Belloc maintains.¹⁹⁵ A major purpose of Belloc's book, The Servile State, is to demonstrate that attempts at Collectivism, well-meaning though some of the Collectivist reformers may be,

191 Ibid., p. 16. The italics are Belloc's.

192 Ibid., pp. 97, 98. Belloc's characterization of the slave state as more stable than the state in which a propertyless proletariat is politically free is of course similar to John C. Calhoun's argument that Southern society, resting as it did on slavery, was more stable than a society resting on free labor.

193 Belloc, "The Restoration of Property," American Review, II (November, 1933), 46-47.

194 Belloc, The Servile State, p. 98.

195 Ibid., p. 101. Collectivist theories of reform envisage "the management of the means of production by the political officers of the community," Belloc says. Ibid.

actually lead towards a

society in which the possessors shall remain possessed, the dispossessed shall remain dispossessed, in which the mass of men shall still work for the advantage of a few, and in which those few shall still enjoy the surplus values produced by labour, but in which the special evils of insecurity and insufficiency, in the main the product of freedom, have been eliminated by the destruction of freedom.

Belloc maintains that "[a]t the end of the process [of reforms begun with avowedly Collectivistic purposes] you will have two kinds of men, the owners economically free, and controlling to their peace and to the guarantee of their livelihood the economically unfree non-owners." That, says Belloc, "is the Servile State."¹⁹⁶

Belloc's own way to "solve"¹⁹⁷ Capitalism is by "a reaction towards well-divided property"¹⁹⁸--or, specifically, by the revival of a peasantry.¹⁹⁹ In The Servile State, however, and in A History of England, he is concerned not with blue-printing the Distributive State of the future but with recording the Distributive State which was achieved in the past, prior to the rise of the Capitalist State. Here it is that we encounter the medieval picture behind Belloc's indictment of capitalistic democracy. The Middle Ages, Belloc claims, "instinctively conceived and brought into existence the DISTRIBUTIVE STATE."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁹⁹ See Belloc, "The Restoration of Property," American Review, II (November, 1933), 46-57.

²⁰⁰ Belloc, The Servile State, p. 52.

So long as the Catholic Church and popular monarchy flourished, the property arrangements in English society were essentially healthy.²⁰¹ The popular king is "master of the rich,"²⁰² Belloc maintains; and "[s]ave where great castles (which were only held of the Crown and not owned) made an exception, the pre-Reformation gentry lived as men richer than, but not the masters of, other farmers around them."²⁰³ The ideal toward which medieval English society strove was, says Belloc, "a State in which men should be economically free through the possession of capital and of land."²⁰⁴ Indeed, Belloc claims that in actuality during the Middle Ages "well distributed property in land . . . was the universal rule."²⁰⁵ This does not mean that Belloc is unaware of the institution of serfdom or villeinage--on the contrary, he says in his History of England that "the lay society of England in the Middle Ages, as of the rest of Western Christendom, was feudal, i.e. a pyramid, based on the serfs--at least nine-tenths of the population."²⁰⁶ He emphasizes, however, that even among the serfs of the Middle Ages, "every man, or rather, every family, had some land"; and that "so long as the dues of that family to the lord of the villa were discharged,

²⁰¹ Belloc, A History of England, IV (London, 1931), 37.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 38.

²⁰³ Belloc, The Servile State, p. 65.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁰⁵ Belloc, "The Restoration of Property," American Review, II (November, 1933), 47.

²⁰⁶ Belloc, A History of England, II, 38.

that family was secure in its holding from father to son forever."²⁰⁷ When he speaks of serfdom in the eleventh or twelfth century, Belloc apparently does not consider the labor exacted of the serf to be a serious infringement on the serf's freedom: the serf of the "early Middle Ages, of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, . . . is already nearly a peasant," Belloc remarks, complacently, and explains that the serf

is indeed bound in legal theory to the soil upon which he was born. In social practice, all that is required of him is that his family should till its quota of servile land, and that the dues to the lord shall not fail from absence of labour. ²⁰⁸

Tate, we may recall, seems to think that in general a decline in "human liberty" and "moral standards" set in after the twelfth century in England.²⁰⁹ Even the condition of the yeomanry--an example of the kind of "free peasantry" in which, Tate believes, "[a]ll great cultures have been rooted"--is satisfactory to Tate only for the period before the fourteenth century.²¹⁰ Tate, it seems, is even more partial to a feudal organization of society than is Belloc, who is willing to applaud not only the feudal labor system but certain aspects of the trend away from a feudal labor system up until the sixteenth-century Reformation.²¹¹ Tate's selection of the thirteenth century as the latest period

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁰⁸ Belloc, The Servile State, p. 47.

²⁰⁹ Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 737.

²¹⁰ Tate, "On the Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 273.

²¹¹ Belloc, The Servile State, pp. 48, 57.

at which the yeomanry's role in society is satisfactory to him²¹² suggests that he can be reasonably well pleased with a society in which a free peasantry is only a small proportion of the whole population--provided a great part of the remaining population are bound each to each by ties of mutual obligation.

We are now ready to point to the relation of Belloc's thought to Tate's image of Old Southern society. Tate, like the Distributist Belloc, has professed theoretical admiration for a society in which a significant number of men would operate their own "small units of production."²¹³ Only the society based upon a true property system--a system in which ownership and control of property are joined--makes liberty and moral standards possible, he has maintained.²¹⁴ Yet as an example of the man whose way of life permitted a unity between morals and economics Tate has singled out, not the nonslaveholding farmer of the Old South, but the ante-bellum owner of a Georgian mansion²¹⁵--the kind of person who typically owned slaves. Furthermore (though with "reservations"--which he does not specify) Tate has selected the twelfth century--a period when the greater part of the rural people were villeins--as the moment after which a decline in

²¹² Tate, "On the Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 273.

²¹³ Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? p. 92.

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 80-84, 93; Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), pp. 738-740.

²¹⁵ Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 302-303.

"moral standards and human liberty" began in England.²¹⁶ Is it not odd that Tate, who warns us against the possible rise of a "Servile State,"²¹⁷ should present for our admiring contemplation societies in which a significant proportion of the more substantial classes were supported by the labor of unfree men? Meditation upon Mr. Belloc's remarkable medieval paradise--the Distributive society in which (according to Belloc) nine-tenths of the people were serfs²¹⁸--may help us to understand some peculiarities in Tate's notions about liberty and property. If Tate holds with Belloc that during the Middle Ages "well distributed property in land . . . was the universal rule"²¹⁹ and if Tate chooses the twelfth century in England as the point after which, in general, there was a decline in "moral standards and human liberty,"²²⁰ he may be willing to stretch his definition of "property" (to suit the convenience of twelfth-century England) so that the definition includes land which one has a right to use and to pass on to an heir provided one renders certain services and dues to one's superiors. But how are we to explain Tate's extolling of the ante-bellum man in the Georgian mansion? Was not the man in the Georgian mansion typically supported by

²¹⁶ Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 737.

²¹⁷ Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 6.

²¹⁸ Belloc, "The Restoration of Property," American Review, II (November, 1933), 47; Belloc, A History of England, II, 38.

²¹⁹ Belloc, "The Restoration of Property," American Review, II (November, 1933), 47.

²²⁰ Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 737.

laborers who had been imported, bought, or retained specifically because it was felt that they could be prevented from becoming either free men or property owners? By no stretch of our imagination can we conceive of the ante-bellum slave, in general, as having had the opportunity to make responsible choices through the medium of property which he personally owned and controlled.²²¹ When Tate calls the ante-bellum labor system (slavery) "feudal"²²² or "semi-feudal,"²²³ suggesting that it was good insofar as it could be characterized as feudal, he must be thinking of qualities in the medieval feudal labor system beyond its guarantee of land to the serf. We are thrown back on the possibility that in Tate's mind another desirable feature of a feudal order may be its relatively fixed defining of status in terms other than cash--that is, in terms such as obligation and loyalty.²²⁴ The implications of this aspect of Tate's thought we shall investigate in Chapter IV of this dissertation when we discuss the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' treatment of Calhoun's social thought.

²²¹ See pp. 86-88 of this dissertation for Tate's ideas on the relation of property to moral standards and human liberty.

²²² Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 167.

²²³ Tate, "Religion and the Old South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 315. "Religion and the Old South" is a revised version of "Remarks on the Southern Religion," the essay cited in the preceding footnote.

²²⁴ See Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 39-40; or see pp. 216-220 of this dissertation.

What is the general bearing of Tate's medievalism upon his myths of Old Southerners? There is no simple answer to this question. It does seem clear, however, that his love of medieval society and his revulsion against bourgeois democracy--attitudes which have undoubtedly been formed at least in part by his reading of such writers as Eliot, Spengler, Maurras, and Belloc--have had two closely allied effects on his account of Old Southern social thinkers, leaders, and society. In the first place, he has tended to idealize certain thinkers such as Calhoun by implying that they stood for a feudal society, which was stable and relatively non-acquisitive. In the second place, he has sometimes criticized Old Southerners severely on the grounds that they were unmedieval in certain respects. Some of the peculiarities of Tate's image of the Old South--peculiarities paralleled in Lytle's account of that society--derive from his belief that the Old South, admirable as it was if compared with present-day society, was a stage in the disintegration of that feudal culture which reached its apex in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Tate, like his wife Caroline Gordon, seems to be oppressed, from time to time, with a feeling that the Old South, after all, was part of America and that America is a

"continent of death."²²⁵ Certain implications of this aspect of Tate's thought--including some revenges it takes on him--will become fully evident only in Chapter V of this dissertation when Tate's picture of the Southwest's departure from feudal stability is discussed. At the present moment in our study, our acquaintance with Tate's medievalism is our road to understanding his image of Thomas Jefferson. As we shall see, Tate's image of Jefferson seems to owe something to another British Catholic historian, whose account of the decline of the American republic is written from a point of view not unlike that in Hilaire Belloc's account of the decline of England after the Reformation.

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In a review of William Carlos Williams' In the American Grain, Tate said (in 1927--the year before he published Stonewall Jackson) that America seemed to have been founded in a "hierarchy of dead forms." Tate alluded to D. H. Lawrence's characterization of America as the "continent of death." See Tate, "Our Will-to-Death," New Masses, II (January, 1927), 29.

Professor Henry Bamford Parkes has pointed out to me that Tate's wife (Caroline Gordon) also used the phrase "death continent" to describe the United States. Miss Gordon specifically included the South in the continent of death; when she wrote the novel Penhally she apparently assumed that the antebellum South, however superior it might have been when compared with twentieth-century business civilization, was, if viewed from the perspective of the older European tradition (by which she apparently meant the continental Catholic tradition), but an extended episode in the murder of European values by forces which she seemed to identify with Anglo-Saxon Puritanism. See Caroline Gordon, "Excerpt from a Letter Written to Bernard Bandler II," Hound And Horn, V (July-September, 1932), 672-673.

CHAPTER III
HERETICS IN THE TRUTH:
THOMAS JEFFERSON
AND
JOHN TAYLOR OF CAROLINE

Jefferson had many charms;
Was democratic; still--and yet
What should one do? The family arms
On coach and spoon he wisely set
Against historical alarms,
For quality not being loath
Nor quantity, nor the fame of both.

Allen Tate, "On the Father of Liberty,"
Sewanee Review, XXXVIII (Winter, 1930),
60.

I. THE JEFFERSONIAN HERESY

The Vanderbilt Traditionalists--or Agrarians, as they chose to call themselves--are, of course, one of the numerous groups who have tried to identify their cause with the Jeffersonian (as opposed to the Hamiltonian) element in the American tradition.¹ Yet even the casual reader of Allen Tate's historical writings, Robert Penn Warren's poem Brother to Dragons, and the miscellaneous writings of lesser Vanderbilt Traditionalists is aware that Jeffersonianism, as many American democrats interpret it, is not entirely congenial to Mr. Tate, Mr. Warren, and their friends. Warren has made his sentiments fairly clear in his Brother to Dragons (published in 1953). Tate, as is his habit, has been more cryptic than Warren. From time to time, since 1925, Tate has pinned epithets to the name of Jefferson. These labels, brief though they are, seem to suggest that Jefferson has been twice damned as a heretic: once by the religionists, past and present, who

¹ See, for example, Tate's remark on the issue he treats in his essay "Notes on Liberty and Property" in Who Owns America? (the anthology edited by Tate and Herbert Agar). On p. 90 of this essay, Tate says of the struggle between the "collectivists" and those who believe in the private control of property: "The struggle is not new. It is the meaning of American history. Hamilton and Jefferson are the symbols of the struggle."

have (like Mr. Tate) feared the secular foundations of Jefferson's liberalism and once by his fellow Old Southerners who resented the egalitarian cast of Jefferson's social thought--when they recognized it for what it was.

In 1925, Jefferson appeared in one of Tate's essays as the "urbane heretical democrat"--who (although he was "undetected in that role") meant business when he used the "eighteenth-century political and humanitarian catchwords." Jefferson's ideas, Tate added, "ironically contributed to the economic and spiritual bankruptcy of the next generation in his own regime." (To make the reader's task more difficult, these remarks appeared in the one of Tate's essays containing the most pointedly satiric remarks he has made about Old Southern aristocratic pretensions--pretensions which Jeffersonian principles would have curbed.)² In 1929, Tate was still using the term "heresy" to characterize Jefferson's thought: democracy or equalitarianism was a doctrine for which Old Southerners had little use, Tate said. According to Tate, Dr. Thomas Dew's "philosophy of inequality" merely made "explicit", in the 1830's, the philosophy which "Southerners, except for Jefferson's moment of heresy, had believed all along."³ That democrats like Jefferson were a very tiny group even at the time of the American Revolution was implied by Tate in 1935 when he declared: "Virginia took the lead in the American Revolution,

² Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486.

³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 44.

not to set up democracy, as Jefferson tried to believe, but to increase the power of the tobacco-exporting aristocracy."⁴

Tate's most recent allusion to Jefferson designates Jefferson's vision of a "small Utopia of small farmers and small artisans" as one item in the history of a "demon" which Tate labels "Utopian politics." Although Tate does not elaborate upon the consequences of the Jeffersonian species of Utopianism, he immediately suggests that Utopian politics in general "brought into the western world, beginning with the French Revolution, the bloodiest and most destructive wars in history to replace the old wars of 'limited objective.'" Such an unqualified generalization inevitably casts a sinister light upon Jefferson's particular brand of egalitarian "Utopian politics."⁵

In another recent characterization of Jefferson, Tate blames Jefferson for successfully fastening on the Old Southern temperament the destructive Cartesian and Lockean heresy. Jefferson appears in this article (on Poe) in the role of secularist who helped impose an orthodoxy of rationalism on the South. Tate suggests that because of Jefferson's influence on ante-bellum Southern culture, poor Edgar Allan Poe suffered a dissociation of his personality into the components of feeling, will, and intellect: "Had . . . not [Poe] been bred in a society committed to the rationalism of Descartes and Locke by that eminent angel of the rationalistic Enlightenment, Thomas Jefferson?" Tate inquires.⁶

⁴ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 275.

⁵ Tate, "Christ and the Unicorn," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Spring, 1955), 177-178.

⁶ See Tate's article "The Angelic Imagination: Poe and the Power of Words," Kenyon Review, XIV (Summer, 1952), 468-469. Or see the same passage in Tate, Forlorn Demon, p. 71.

The image of Jefferson contrived by Robert Penn Warren puts the old angel of the rationalistic Enlightenment under a Dark Cloud of Unknowing much more effectually than do the labels affixed by Tate to the name of Jefferson. In a poem such as Brother to Dragons, Warren is of course not obligated to present faithfully either the personality or the ideas of the historic Jefferson. But why Warren chooses to write a poem setting forth what William Van O'Connor calls "the spiritual consequences of Jeffersonian idealism"⁷ and what the effect of the poem may be on those already disposed to question Jeffersonian liberalism--these surely are legitimate subjects for speculation. Warren's device for repudiating much of

⁷ William Van O'Connor, "The Burden of Innocence," Sewanee Review, LXII (Winter, 1954), 149. Warren's own prefatory comment in Brother to Dragons suggests that he has tried to make his poem a serious interpretation of American history. Warren expresses in the following words his attitude toward the handling of the facts and the meaning of American history in Brother to Dragons:

"I know that any discussion of the relation of this poem to its historical materials is, in one perspective, irrelevant to its value. I am trying to write a poem and not a history, and therefore have no compunction about tampering with facts. But poetry is more than fantasy and is committed to the obligation of trying to say something about the human condition. Therefore a poem dealing with history is no more at liberty to violate what the writer takes to be the spirit of his history than it is at liberty to violate what the writer takes to be the nature of the human heart. What he takes those things to be is, of course, his ultimate gamble.

"This is another way of saying that I have tried to make my poem make, in a thematic way, historical sense along with whatever other kind of sense it may be happy enough to make. Historical sense and poetic sense should not, in the end, be contradictory, for if poetry is the little myth we make, history is the big myth we live, and in our living, constantly remake. Warren, "Foreword," Brother to Dragons, p. xii.

Jeffersonian liberalism is simple: he manufactures, in Brother to Dragons, a Jefferson who repudiates (after death) his vision of man as capable of the "brotherhood of justice."⁸ The vision, Jefferson is made to say, was really of a beast--though he did not recognize it as such when he first met it at the genesis of the Declaration of Independence. It seemed "no beast then," says Jefferson. He then goes on to describe the fallacious vision as

. . . the towering
Definition, angelic, arrogant, abstract,
Greaved in glory, thewed with light, the bright
Brow tall as dawn.

Explaining how he was deceived into writing the Declaration, Jefferson remarks of the vision:

. . . I could not see the eyes.

So seized the pen, and in the upper room,
With the excited consciousness that I was somehow
Purged, rectified, and annealed, and my past annulled
And fate confirmed, wrote
I had not seen the eyes of that bright apparition.
I had been blind with light. That was my doom.
I did not know its eyes were blind. 9

⁸ The phrase is used by Warren's Meriwether Lewis when he accuses Jefferson of having unfitted him for life. Lewis says he was "lulled" by Jefferson's "great lie that men are capable/Of the brotherhood of justice." Warren, Brother to Dragons, p. 182.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 9-10. See also pp. 6-10 for the context of the passages quoted here.

Jefferson's "heresy" and the heresy of John Taylor--who has been called the "literary apostle of Jeffersonian democracy"--have been discussed in some detail by two writers with whom Tate is quite familiar. The first of these two writers is Christopher Hollis, whose interpretation of American History is found in The American Heresy,¹⁰ a volume containing biographies of Jefferson, Calhoun, Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson. John Lincoln Stewart points out in his illuminating unpublished dissertation that in the spring of 1928, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, and Tate were "much excited and influenced in their thinking by The American Heresy, which all of them had been reading."¹¹ Tate has acknowledged his indebtedness to Hollis in a remarkable note at the end of his biography, Jefferson Davis:

In so far as the general point of view of this volume [i.e., Tate's Jefferson Davis] is not the author's--in so far as it is indebted [sic] to influences too minute or too remote to be acknowledged--it is that of a book called The American Heresy, by Christopher Hollis. The book is incomplete and inaccurately documented, but it is the first effort to comprehend the supposedly mixed forces of American history under a single idea.¹²

Hollis announced that The American Heresy presented "the decline and fall of American Republicanism in an especial way"--that it "treat(ed) . . . of the United States as a religious heresy."¹³

¹⁰ Christopher Hollis, The American Heresy (London, 1927).

¹¹ Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: a History and a Criticism", p. 291.

¹² Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 303. Italics mine. What Hollis's "single idea" was is not discussed by John Lincoln Stewart, who is interested primarily in agrarian aspects of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' thought.

¹³ Hollis, The American Heresy, pp. 7-8.

Jefferson was viewed by Hollis as a "great heresiarch."¹⁴ The London edition of The American Heresy (the edition which Ransom, Tate and Davidson read) went so far as to label Jefferson an "infidel,"¹⁵ though this particular epithet was tactfully omitted from the American edition.¹⁶ Perhaps Hollis's book furnished Tate with an extended meaning for the term "heretical"--a term which Tate had already begun, several years before reading The American Heresy, to apply to Jefferson.

Hollis emphasized that admirable as Jefferson was by comparison with the industrial plutocrats who rule America now, Jefferson's program implementing man's "right to liberty and the dogma of human equality" was doomed to failure because Jefferson had not deduced these two principles from "dogmatic religion." Jefferson (said Hollis) merely "adopted" these two principles "as sentiments"--and "built his philosophy upon a denial of dogmatic religion." And, Hollis emphasized, "this is the American heresy":

America is an example of how the principles of liberty and equality, unregulated by religious authority which can adjust their competing claims, may destroy a state. For it was inevitable that, since he [Jefferson] had not reason to compel assent, each man would restate these principles [the right to liberty and the dogma of human equality] as it suited his convenience. The Jeffersonian state, which came to birth in the War of Independence, died in the Civil War. 17

¹⁴Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁶Hollis, The American Heresy (New York, 1930), p. 6 contains the other epithets applied to Jefferson on p. 14 of the London edition, but leaves out the label "infidel."

¹⁷Hollis, The American Heresy (London, 1927), p. 9. Unless otherwise noted, all future quotations will be from this London edition of The American Heresy.

Even though the end "[o]f this, as of all . . . heresies, . . . is nothing," Hollis stressed,

[y]et it was a great heresy And to-day, as the darkness gathers in and rich men bind down the poor with their mean reforms and puking slaveries, no man can be worse if he remember Monticello and the great prophet, who, with all his failings and inconsistencies, yet dedicated a giant's strength to the service of Freedom. 18

Hollis concedes the following final compliment to the giant infidel, Jefferson:

Four or five times God, in His mercy, has raised up against His Truth an enemy, almost worthy of the combat. Here [Jefferson] was one. 19

Jefferson's second admiring inquisitor, with whose articles it is difficult to believe that both Tate and Warren were not intimately familiar, is Andrew Nelson Lytle.²⁰ Lytle's three-part study of John Taylor of Caroline undertook to place in

18 Ibid., p. 98.

19 Ibid., p. 97.

20 Tate's poem "Message from Abroad" is dedicated to Lytle. See p. 10 of Tate's Poems: 1922-1947. Lytle appears as a character in Tate's poem entitled "The Oath." See p. 107 of Tate's Poems: 1922-1947. During the period from 1933 to 1937, Lytle, Tate, and Warren (as well as Davidson and Ransom) contributed articles and reviews to the American Review, a magazine which was expressly intended to be an organ for writers who like the Agrarians, the Humanists, and the Distributists discussed society and the arts from a "traditional" or conservative point of view. Seward Collins, the owner and editor, mentions these three groups as the kind he would favor. See pp. 123-125 of Vol. I of the American Review (April, 1933). Lytle's chief comment on Jefferson and Taylor is found in two lengthy studies which appeared in the American Review. See Andrew N. Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 432-447; III (October, 1934), 630-643; IV (November, 1934), 84-99; and Andrew N. Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 409-434.

permanent quarantine Jefferson's and Taylor's "liberal errors." Lytle apparently wished to disinfect the Jeffersonian tradition--to purify it of its contamination by the eighteenth-century enlightenment. His purpose was to show that the really valuable portion of Taylor's thought was its conservatism.

Lytle includes among the "liberal intellectual principles" of Jefferson and Taylor most of the things for which Americans idolize Jefferson: the Republicans under Jefferson, says Lytle, espoused "liberty of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, as little government as possible, no entailment of land, no foreign wars, and a state where most of the population owned land." These principles, says Lytle, were "Jefferson's answer to the evil practices of the recent past." The value of these liberal Jeffersonian intellectual principles which Taylor adopted, Lytle is quick to minimize:

As publicist and strategist for the party,
John Taylor rested his defense finally
upon this liberalism which he had caught
in his youth as one might catch the pox.
If this were all that might be claimed

for him there would be little reason to disturb his dusty bones.²¹

Fortunately (Lytle implies), Taylor and, to a certain extent, Jefferson had "conservative instincts and desires"²²--and it is these instincts, rather than the liberal intellectual principles, which Lytle thinks Americans should cherish. By "conservative instincts," Lytle apparently means somewhat the same quality which Tate praises when he says that Jefferson advised "reliance" on "'taste'" (that is, "custom, breeding, ingrained moral decision") rather than on abstract reasoning.²³

²¹ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (October, 1934), 632-633. It may be significant that Lytle includes here among Jefferson's not-so-profound liberal ideas the idea of a "state where most of the population owned land." "Agrarianism" if unaccompanied by "conservative instincts and desires" may not be very attractive to Lytle. Ibid.

The admirer of Tate may interject at this point that Tate has in practice, if not in theory, demonstrated his love of freedom of speech. The point may be granted. As evidence that Tate has expressed disapproval of censorship in its various forms, we may see Tate, [Letter to the Editor (concerning the banning of the movie, The Miracle)], New York Times, February 1, 1951; and Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485. It should be noted, however, that Tate has recently mentioned "the inalienable right to talk back" as "one light which even the black slaves of the Old South were permitted to keep burning." Such a remark may well raise a serious question as to what Tate's definition of "freedom of speech" is. See "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," in Allen Tate's The Forlorn Demon: Didactic and Critical Essays (Chicago, 1953), p. 16. Parts of this essay by Tate were read May 21, 1952, at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris.

²² Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (October, 1934), 633.

²³ Tate is discussing the correspondence of Jefferson with John Adams on the "possibility of morals." See Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 170.

And the liberal delusion of Taylor and Jefferson is, according to Lytle, a total reliance on politics²⁴--the same delusion (that is, that politics can save us) which Tate sees as the South's baneful but not wholly escapable heritage from Jefferson.²⁵ The central question I shall raise is whether a distaste for liberal political and social ideas is interwoven with Tate's and Lytle's avowed dislike of Jefferson's absorption in politics--and whether other Vanderbilt Traditionalists have, in fact, repudiated certain aspects of Jefferson's egalitarianism.

II. PLAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CHAPTER

A more precise image of the things which Lytle, Tate, Warren, Davidson, and Frank Lawrence Owsley deplore or admire in Jefferson and Taylor can be constructed if we examine the specific remarks of these Vanderbilt Traditionalists on (1) the older institutions attacked by Jefferson, (2) some positive goods praised by Jefferson, (3) the contemporary devils damned by Jefferson (and especially by Taylor), and (4) the political mechanism which Jefferson proposed as a continuing means of preventing the stratification of society into classes of the very rich and the very poor. Among the traditional institutions that Jefferson attacked were the established church, slavery, entail, and primogeniture. Among the positive goods he advocated most vigorously were the wide distribution of property in land

²⁴Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 98.

²⁵ See Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 174-175.

and the public support of such education for the masses as would make them discerning and responsible citizen-voters and such education for the highly talented as would make them responsible citizen-leaders. The contemporary devils, according to Jefferson and Taylor, were, of course, monarchy and the Hamiltonian plutocracy of "paper and patronage."²⁶ And the political mechanism with which Jefferson and Taylor meant to replace aristocracy and monarchy (in their opinion, the agents of oppression in the past) was, of course, representative government. Not all the Vanderbilt Traditionalists have commented on each of these items in the Jeffersonian program, but at least one Traditionalist has expressed views on each item. We should not, naturally, assume that the view of any one Traditionalist on any item is the view of other Traditionalists. But it is surely legitimate to note the cumulative effect of these Traditionalists' views.

Some of Jefferson's most far-reaching proposals (proposals which were directly intended to implement the liberal vision of the "human possibility")²⁷ are, as we shall see, not very attractive to Lytle and Davidson. In fact, only two of Jefferson's and Taylor's liberal proposals have full support from Tate, Lytle, and Davidson. Patrick Quinn, a writer who has raised the question "Is the Agrarian claim to a Jeffersonian tradition a valid claim?" has emphatically

²⁶ John Taylor, An Inquiry into the Principles and Policy of the Government of the United States (New Haven, 1930), p. 50. Taylor's Inquiry was first published in 1814.

²⁷ A phrase spoken by the Jefferson of Warren's Brother to Dragons. See p. 109 of Brother to Dragons.

declared: "That answer is, almost unqualifiedly, yes."²⁸ It is our purpose in this chapter to determine whether the answer to that question may not rather be "The Agrarian claim to a Jeffersonian tradition is valid only in a very limited sense." A survey of Tate's and Lytle's writings shows that, with the exception of the proposals that a large portion of the population live on the land and that the power of the paper aristocrats be curbed, those Jeffersonian proposals which have historically been deduced from the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and the plan for publicly supported education in Virginia win little, if any, applause from Tate and Lytle. That Warren thinks these three facets of Jefferson's program were based on an inaccurate view of human nature may be implied in the fact that Warren's puppet-Jefferson admits that his "triple boast" about these three accomplishments "split" his heart.²⁹ The "human definition"³⁰ implied in his triple boast, Jefferson is made to see and to acknowledge (at times) in Warren's poem is fallacious. What was lacking in the historical Jefferson's liberal program, Warren seems to be saying in Brother to Dragons, was an admission that man is depraved (and, one might add, not worth the risk involved in

²⁸ Patrick Quinn, "Agrarianism and the Jeffersonian Philosophy," Review of Politics, II (January, 1940), 104.

²⁹ Warren, Brother to Dragons, p. 5.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

Jefferson's or any other leader's liberal program.)³¹ At one point Warren makes his Jefferson admit that the Jeffersonian philosophy was entirely unrealistic because it blinked the facts of man's deep depravity.³²

³¹ Cf. R[ichard] M. Weaver's praise of the ultra-conservative, Albert Taylor Bledsoe. Bledsoe, Weaver emphasizes, was free of the French radicalism which denied the depravity of man. Weaver praises the "structural" society which the pro-slavery apologist, Bledsoe, linked with his view of human nature. See Richard M. Weaver, "Albert Taylor Bledsoe," Sewanee Review, LII (Winter, 1944), 40-42. Weaver's doctoral dissertation, "The Confederate States, 1865-1910: A Study in the Survival of a Mind and Culture," was completed in 1943 at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, and others sponsored the Southern Review between 1935 and 1942.

³² Warren, Brother to Dragons, pp. 44-47. The "enlightened" Jefferson at the end of Warren's poem is a greater fool than the earlier and "unenlightened" seer of the Lockean vision of man--the vision that was (as Warren would have it) recorded in that beastly document, the Declaration of Independence. Having been "enlightened" by the experience of having a murderer for a nephew, Jefferson is made to ejaculate a silly philosophy, which in effect maintains that no truth is born except out of the evil and anguish of a man-made hell:

We must strike the steel of wrath on the stone of guilt,
And hope to provoke, thus, in the midst of our coiling darkness
The incandescence of the heart's great flare.
And in that illumination I should hope to see
How all creation validates itself.
For whatever you create, you create yourself by it,
And in creating yourself you will create
The whole wide world and gleaming West anew.

Warren, Brother to Dragons, p. 195.

So senile is Warren's Jefferson after his baptism in the knowledge of evil that the innocent reader may welcome the speeches of R. P. W. (ostensibly Warren himself) as containing a wisdom superior to that of the Jeffersonian tradition. (See ibid., pp. 195-196. Cf. Hart Crane's prayer to the "Medicine-man" to "Lie to us-- dance us back our tribal morn!" Hart Crane, "The Bridge," Collected Poems of Hart Crane [New York, 1933], p. 21.) Before welcoming R. P. W. (Warren) as the new American Messiah who has slain the tired dragon of Jeffersonian liberalism, however, the reader will do well to examine Warren's writings very carefully--to see whether Warren himself offers a philosophy superior to the philosophy which he attributes to his mythical Jefferson.

III. INSTITUTIONS ATTACKED BY JEFFERSON OR TAYLOR

The Established Church

To turn to the remarks of a Vanderbilt traditionalist on the first of the specific proposals by which Jefferson meant to affirm the brotherhood of man--and, incidentally, to emphasize the evil of having a combined religious and temporal authority wield power over masses of men: Jefferson's attack on the idea of an established church is to Andrew Nelson Lytle an abomination. Lytle's sarcasm is heavy:

Jefferson wrote some mighty pretty words: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and in their name he destroyed the Church . . . , the high tower . . . of traditional society. 33

In a sweeping historical analogy, Lytle maintains that "Jefferson and Taylor went much farther than the Whig nobles who began by conniving with the Tudors for the Church lands";³⁴ "liberal [Jeffersonian] abstractions", says Lytle, "deluded" John Taylor into advocating that "separation of state and church" which would "render" his "descendants . . . agnostics, humanitarians, or brothers in Y. M. C. A."³⁵ Lytle (like Ransom)³⁶ has little use for a "humanitarian" religion--that is a religion unconcerned with dogmatic metaphysics, but very much concerned with the

³³ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 96.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

³⁶ See, for example, pp. 5, 146, and 147 of Ransom's God Without Thunder.

establishment of human brotherhood. Apparently Lytle is less willing than Christopher Hollis to concede that toleration was perhaps right as a religious policy in eighteenth-century Virginia.³⁷ Lytle can have no sympathy with Jefferson's notion that one of the errors of the past was the collaboration of church and state, in many societies, in exploiting the people.³⁸ Lytle, believing that an established church is essential to the traditional society he admires, can only be repelled by Jefferson's invidious references to religious "hierarchies" and the "loathesome combination of Church and State."³⁹ Nothing could be more un-Jeffersonian than Lytle's assumption that the "foundations" of a "State . . . are best laid upon the dogma of one religion."⁴⁰ Lytle maintains that the "temporal policies of a Church which had been thrown down had perplexed [the] . . . minds [of Jefferson and the eighteenth-century liberals] on religion and its corruption."⁴¹ We may suspect that it is this

³⁷ Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 36.

³⁸ Jefferson's idea was, it will be recalled, as follows (to cite one particularly forceful phrasing of that idea): "In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own. It is easier to acquire wealth and power by this combination than by deserving them, and to effect this, they have perverted the purest religion ever preached to man into mystery and jargon, unintelligible to all mankind, and therefore the safer engine for their purposes." Jefferson to H. G. Spafford in 1814, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh, et al. (Washington, D. C., 1905), XIV, 119. Quoted in Saul K. Padover's Thomas Jefferson on Democracy (New York, 1939), p. 84.

³⁹ Jefferson to C. Clay in 1815, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, XIV, 234. Quoted in Padover's Thomas Jefferson on Democracy, p. 116.

⁴⁰ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 415.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 416.

distrust on Jefferson's part of established churches (and other established institutions) which prompts Tate to declare:

We are not now and never have been a nation of philosophers, not even, in the Virginian period, a nation of political philosophers. Our greatest metaphysician of the state, Thomas Jefferson, was incurably provincial, more in time than in space.⁴²

Tate's explanation (via a narrator in the short story, "The Migration,") of a Scotch-Irish immigrant's Jeffersonian dislike of the established church in Virginia sounds like a gloss on Lytle's theory about Jeffersonian liberals' prejudice against established religion. Of the immigrant (an artisan who later became a pioneer-planter in Tennessee) Tate's narrator says:

His hatred of the established church in Virginia to which he grudgingly paid tithes, was backed up by a long antagonism, bred in him for six generations, against everything British and nearly everything that was established. For all such institutions, he said, grew fat on the blood of the people. ⁴³

Does Tate, we wonder, feel that his Scotch-Irish immigrant and Jefferson were "provincial in time" because they had no accurate memory of the medieval period--a period when the Catholic church prevented men from growing fat on each other's blood? Owsley, whose "Protestant blood flows steady in his veins,"⁴⁴ does not, it must be emphasized, view with alarm Jefferson's move to disestablish the Episcopalian Church in Virginia.⁴⁵

⁴² Tate, "Confusion and Poetry," Sewanee Review, XXXVIII (Spring, 1930), 133.

⁴³ Allen Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 86.

⁴⁴ Tate uses this phrase to characterize Stonewall Jackson. See Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 45.

⁴⁵ Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? pp. 61-62.

Slavery

The second of Jefferson's proposals for erasing from the face of America the relics of the tyrannical past is handled gingerly by Tate, Warren, Lytle, Davidson, and Owsley: Jefferson's most stringent criticism of slavery is apparently not very pleasing to any of them.⁴⁶ Various ways of discrediting or minimizing the importance of Jefferson's anti-slavery sentiment are employed.

Tate's manner of dealing with Jefferson's egalitarian criticism of slavery has been, to say the least, odd. In his essay "Remarks on the Southern Religion," published in 1930, Tate misses a good opportunity to state without equivocation his attitude toward Jefferson's anti-slavery principles as well as toward Jefferson's egalitarianism in general. In a work intended to present Southern tradition in an ingratiating light, Tate's failure to face the issue of Jefferson's emancipationism is perhaps revelatory of something. Certainly Tate's mistake on a date mentioned in his discussion seems significant. The erroneous date is 1832, which Tate says was the year in which the Virginia Constitutional Convention "repudiated Jefferson."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Edd Winfield Parks, a minor disciple of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists, emphasizes Jefferson's policy of quiescence on the slavery issue: Jefferson's "greatest concern," says Parks, "was that his book [Notes on Virginia] might do harm if it appeared in America. He had spoken harshly of slavery, and his words might produce an irritation that would [in Jefferson's words] 'retard that reformation which I wish, instead of promoting it.'" See Parks, "Jefferson as a Man of Letters," Georgia Review, VI (Winter, 1952), 452-453.

⁴⁷ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 174.

The motive Tate gives for this repudiation is Virginians' disbelief in Jefferson's doctrine that the "ends of man are sufficiently contained in his political destiny."⁴⁸ This is a motive which no other historian, so far as I know, attributes to the Virginians of the 1830's.

What, it may be asked, is significant about Tate's assignment of the date 1832 to the Virginia Constitutional Convention? There was no Virginia Constitutional Convention in 1832, but there was one in 1829-30, and it might be said in Tate's defense that his error may have been no more than typographical and has perhaps no bearing on his interpretation of the Virginians' anti-Jeffersonianism. The fact is, however, that there were debates on slavery in the Virginia General Assembly in 1832. These debates may be what Tate had in mind when he mentioned that year but made no mention of the issue of egalitarianism which was clearly at stake in Virginia discussions of Jefferson at that time. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, nephew of Jefferson, presented in 1832 a post nati scheme like the emancipation proposal originally made by Jefferson in 1779.⁴⁹ The debates which followed (and their journalistic aftermath) were full of anti-Jeffersonianism, but the attacks were directed at egalitarianism and Jefferson's views on slavery--not, as Tate would have it, at Jefferson's supposed belief that politics sufficiently contains man's ends. Several examples may show that the attacks on

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴⁹ Joseph Clarke Robert, The Road from Monticello: A Study of the Virginia Slavery Debate of 1832 (Durham, 1941), p. 19; Charles Henry Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (Chicago, 1910), pp. 191-192.

Jefferson in 1832 were rooted in distrust of Jefferson's emancipationism. For one thing, according to Joseph Clarke Robert, author of a monograph on the debates, "[c]onservatives sought to minimize the Jeffersonian characteristics of the Randolph plan by contrasting Jefferson's theory with his practice."⁵⁰ Another example of anti-emancipationism (and not of a metaphysical abhorrence of politics) may be found in the post-debate letters, signed by "Appomattox" and published in the Richmond Enquirer. Robert identifies the author of these letters as Benjamin Watkins Leigh, a Richmond lawyer "who had distinguished himself politically as leader of the eastern faction in the Convention of 1829-30." Leigh, according to Robert, by "ingenious innuendo, then less subtle display, . . . charged" that one of the Western anti-slavery delegates to the Assembly in 1832 had made a speech whose most "eloquent passage was based on Thomas Jefferson's Notes on Virginia." Leigh then went on to damn Jefferson by "faint praise and frank criticism."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Robert, The Road from Monticello, p. 26. Robert Penn Warren makes good use of this kind of argument in his poem Brother to ⁵¹ Robert, The Road from Monticello, p. 44. For excerpts from the speech of the western anti-slavery delegate (George W. Summers of Kanawha County), see pp. 84-86 of this monograph by Robert. ⁵¹ Robert, The Road from Monticello, p. 44. For excerpts from the speech of the western anti-slavery delegate (George W. Summers of Kanawha County), see pp. 84-86 of this monograph by Robert. Summers' speech contains a passage which resembles the following passage from Jefferson's Notes on Virginia: "The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. . . . The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances." The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, II, 225-226. Quoted in Padover's Thomas Jefferson on Democracy, pp. 98-99.

Of all the criticisms of Jeffersonian egalitarianism which were prompted by the slavery debates of 1832, the remarks of Thomas Dew, professor of history at William and Mary College, were probably the most famous and influential. According to Charles Ambler, Dew's "powerful essay entitled A Review of the Debates in the Virginia Legislature of 1831-1832 . . . crystallized the pro-slavery sentiment."⁵² William E. Dodd notes that Dew did not begin by attacking the "Jefferson myth"--rather, Dew first "treated historically the mooted subject of Negro slavery."⁵³ Then Dodd quotes what he considers to be the "principle of all [Dew's] . . . teaching":

The exclusive owners of property ever have been, ever will and perhaps ever ought to be the virtual rulers of mankind It is the order of nature and of God that the being of superior faculties and knowledge, and therefore of superior power, should control and dispose of those who are inferior. It is as much in the order of nature that men should enslave each other, as that other animals should prey upon each other.

Dodd comments that Dew "probably did not intend to put the case so harshly as it appears in the last sentence."⁵⁴ It is perfectly clear, however, that Dew is attacking egalitarianism.

Three authorities--Dodd, Ambler, and Robert--agree that the issue behind the anti-Jeffersonianism in connection with the Virginia slavery debates of 1832 was indeed the conservative distrust of Jefferson's emancipationism and egalitarianism--not

⁵² Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861, p. 201

⁵³ William E. Dodd, The Cotton Kingdom: A Chronicle of the Old South (New Haven, 1919), p. 49.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

a disillusionment with the presumption that "politics sufficiently contains the ends of man." If Tate meant to refer to these slavery debates of 1832, the burden of proving his interpretation of Virginians' anti-Jeffersonianism lies with him.

Assuming that Tate had in mind the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 (and not the slavery debates of 1832) when he spoke of a Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1832, the question still remains as to whether the anti-Jeffersonianism present in the Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 is traceable to a dislike of Jefferson's egalitarianism, rather than (as Tate would have it) to an abstract horror at Mr. Jefferson's alleged belief in politics as sufficient container of the ends of man. The main controversial question before the Convention of 1829-30 was the problem of how the representation to the state legislature should be apportioned. In general, eastern delegates wanted their slaves (non-voters, of course) to be included in the population count upon which representation was based. Western delegates wanted representation on the basis of white inhabitants or voting inhabitants.⁵⁵ Dodd's comment on the conservative triumph in this convention is that it "openly disavowed the equalitarian teachings which had underlain the politics of the South since 1800."⁵⁶ Clement Eaton, who cites Dodd as an authority, notes that in the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30, "younger members . . ., like Abel Upshur and Benjamin W. Leigh, derided the doctrine of majority rule, the rule of numbers, as

⁵⁵ Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861, p. 147.

⁵⁶ Dodd, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 48.

a mere abstraction."⁵⁷ Ambler mentions that Upshur and Leigh pointed to slavery as an obvious disproof of the theory that men are, or ought to be, born free and equal.⁵⁸ Apparently three authorities--Dodd, Eaton, and Ambler--view the conservative reaction in 1829-30 as an unequivocal repudiation of the doctrine of egalitarianism and its corollary, majority rule.

A result of Tate's blurring the issue in his reference (in I'll Take My Stand) to the Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 (or to the slavery debates in the Virginia legislature in 1832) is the emergence of a Jefferson who is less explicitly the humanitarian and egalitarian and more emphatically the believer in man's total salvation through political means. This blurring is, I believe, deliberate--though the confusion of the date is involuntary: either ignorance or inner conflict caused Tate inadvertently to use the date 1832 which is even more definitely identified (by Dodd, Ambler, and Robert) with the slavery issue Tate wished to suppress than is the date 1829-30. It is significant that in a work published in 1929 (a year before the publication of I'll Take My Stand), Tate referred accurately --and without the benefit of a "philosophical" veil--to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30. In his biography of Jefferson Davis--which contained among other things a presentation

⁵⁷ See footnote on p. 28 of Clement Eaton's Freedom of Thought in the Old South (Durham, 1940).

⁵⁸ Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861, p. 151. For illustrations of arguments used by Upshur and Leigh, see pp. 72 and 53 of Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Convention of 1829-30 (Richmond, 1830).

of the anti-Jeffersonian philosophy of the Old South⁵⁹--Tate echoed the conventional account of what happened at the Virginia Constitutional Convention, and he placed the Convention, accurately, in 1830:

The gradual repudiation of Jefferson reached the climax four years after his death [that is, in 1830--four years after Jefferson's death in 1826], when the Virginia Constitutional Convention disclaimed the doctrine of the rights and equality of man. 60

Apparently Tate, in 1929, saw clearly that the Virginia Constitutional Convention in its repudiation of Jefferson rejected the doctrine of the rights and equality of man.⁶¹ A year later, in 1930, Tate's vision had become hazy: in I'll Take My Stand, he could say that Virginia's rejection of

⁵⁹ See, for example, pp. 43, 46, 48, 55-56 of Tate's Jefferson Davis, which was published in 1929--the year before Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion" was published in I'll Take My Stand.

⁶⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 44. Cf. the following quotation from Dodd's The Cotton Kingdom, pp. 48-49: "Four years after Jefferson's death, the Virginia Constitutional Convention openly disavowed the equalitarian teachings which had underlain the politics of the South since 1800."

⁶¹ Tate was misleading, however, when, immediately after this passage in Jefferson Davis, he implied (by quoting from but not naming Thomas R. Dew's "Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32") that Dew's famous pro-slavery pamphlet was occasioned by the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 44. Dew's pamphlet, which was actually published in connection with the slavery debates in the Virginia legislature in 1831 and 1832, is accessible in the following reprint: [Thomas R.] Dew, "Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32," in The Pro-Slavery Argument As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States: Containing the Several Essays, on the Subject, of Chancellor [William] Harper, Governor [J. R.] Hammond, Dr. [William G.] Simms, and Professor [Thomas R.] Dew (Philadelphia, 1853).

Jefferson in 1829-30 was an instinctive reaction against the doctrine that "The ends of man are sufficiently contained in his political destiny."⁶² It is instructive that Tate should rejoice in the moment when Virginia turned her back on the opportunity to initiate a gradual form of emancipation, Jeffersonian in inspiration. If Tate has any love for the early Jefferson who would have rescued the South from slavery, why has he not celebrated the Jeffersonian proposal put forward by Thomas Jefferson Randolph in 1832--instead of celebrating (under an aura of metaphysics and historical confusion) Virginia's repudiation of Jeffersonian emancipationism? In 1832, Virginia had one-fifth of the slave population in the United States. Had Virginia set the example by beginning some plan for emancipation, the Civil War might have been averted or at least shortened.⁶³ It is possible to conclude that Virginia lost a great opportunity to dissociate the agrarian from the pro-slavery

⁶² Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," I'll Take My Stand, pp. 173-174. Compare Tate's shifting to "higher ground" (in his interpretation of Virginia's reaction against Jefferson) with Charles Anderson's parenthetical remark on the grounds for the South's rejection of certain "elements . . . in Jefferson's philosophy": in an essay on Robert Penn Warren--written for inclusion in Southern Renaissance, edited by Louis D. Rubin and Robert D. Jacobs--Anderson declares that it is "precisely those elements of idealism based on abstract reason in Jefferson's philosophy that have been rejected in the South." (Charles R. Anderson, "Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Hopkins Review, VI [Winter, 1953], 91). If we are distracted by Tate's and Anderson's abstractions, we can reject Jeffersonian egalitarianism (as it bears on race relations in the South, for instance) without ever admitting to ourselves or others precisely what it is we are rejecting. But if we refuse to be distracted, we may ask Mr. Tate and Mr. Anderson two obstinate questions: (1) Does the rejection of egalitarianism imply that one has decided to become more "spiritual" and less "political"? (2) Is egalitarianism a concept tolerable only to a devilishly abstract reason?

⁶³ Theodore M. Whitfield, Slavery Agitation in Virginia, 1829-1832 (Johns Hopkins University, Studies in Historical and Political Science, new series, no. 10), p. 142.

tradition. Why (we may ask) has Tate avoided reaching any such conclusion?

Frank Lawrence Owsley (like the Tate of 1929 and unlike the Tate of 1930 commenting on Virginia) assumes that Southerners after 1830 tried to forget Jefferson because they thought Jefferson had, in effect, repudiated his section, the South, by his egalitarian political doctrines.⁶⁴ Owsley expresses his regret that the South was (and still is) unaware of the later Jefferson--that is, the Jefferson of the period after 1820. In his last years--at the time of the Missouri Compromise, when Northern politicians attacked the South, and thereafter--Jefferson (as Owsley is pleased to emphasize) became something of a Southern sectionalist. Owsley quotes Jefferson's ironic remark in a letter (written in 1821) about Virginians who will go to Princeton and who "will return home, no doubt, deeply impressed with the sacred principles of our holy alliance of Restrictionists" [those who were demanding that slavery should not be carried into the territories].⁶⁵ The South after about 1831, according to Owsley, felt that it must drop Jefferson's "broad nationalism, . . . opposition to slavery, and . . . egalitarian political doctrines." And, Owsley adds, "It is my belief that in making this change the South felt it necessary to forget Jefferson."⁶⁶ Actually, if Southerners would only

⁶⁴ Frank L. Owsley, "Two Agrarian Philosophers: Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours," Hound and Horn, VI (October-December, 1932), 166-167, 170-171.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 171.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 170-171.

recognize it (says Owsley), they could have their Jefferson and discard what they don't like in him too, for the post-1821 Jefferson, though he "had changed none of his fundamental principles," was "forced like many Southerners to defend [slavery] . . . because of his fear of the freed negro."⁶⁷ Jefferson becomes, in Owsley's portrait, a man no better than the rest of us--timid, pale Southerners or Americans that we are. We need not exorcise Jefferson's egalitarianism from our thinking, Owsley seems to say, for when pressed, Jefferson was no more liberal on the issue of slavery than is the most respectable twentieth-century Southern white conservative on the issue of segregation. The Jefferson who was in the end a compromiser becomes (if we follow Owsley) the grand masterpiece to observe.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 172. Owsley's praise of the aged and sectional-minded Jefferson may be contrasted with Gordon E. Baker's brief article deploring Jefferson's attempt, in his last years, to make the University of Virginia a stronghold of Southernism, protected from Northern ideas. Foreign to Owsley's way of thinking is Baker's observation that "the sectional controversy between 1830 and 1860 . . . was steadily buttressed by the South's institutional isolation from conflicting ideas" and that the University of Virginia's insulation against "foreign" notions was something to be regretted. Gordon E. Baker, "Thomas Jefferson on Academic Freedom," AAUP Bulletin, XXXIX (Autumn, 1953), 384.

⁶⁸ The liberal, like Owsley, may note the fact of Jefferson's partial retreat on the Negro question. But, unlike Owsley, the liberal will be inclined to lament the retreat. Clement Eaton, who is himself in many respects a true inheritor of Jeffersonian liberalism, suggests that Jefferson was simply not a good enough prophet to foresee the important role which the Negro would play in twentieth-century America. See Clement Eaton, "The Jeffersonian Tradition of Liberalism in America," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLIII (January, 1944), 10.

While Owsley has attempted to quiet Southern conservatives' fear that Jefferson's anti-slavery impulse may have teeth in it, Donald Davidson has opened fire on the monstrous twentieth-century Southern liberal who claims to inherit his egalitarianism (in matters of race) from Jefferson. Davidson deplures the emphasis which Southern liberals (like Virginus Dabney) place on Jefferson's anti-slavery principles.⁶⁹ Accusing these liberals of "discreetly shifting the emphasis" away from Jefferson's political and economic theory, Davidson points out that they have an un-Jeffersonian love of "'consolidation'" and that they "are likely to think of farmers as 'yokels' until they become proletarians and join a union."⁷⁰ Thus Davidson himself discreetly shifts attention away from racial egalitarianism based on natural rights philosophy. He tries to discredit the Southern liberals by saying that their "intellectual pedigree" may be traced to "the New England humanitarians" and that their "contemporary friends and relations may be found among the Marxians and socialists."⁷¹ Davidson is, presumably, trying to deny Jeffersonian parentage to the Southerner whose conscience is troubled about racial oppression.

Remaining to be discussed are (1) the attitude of Warren--more complex than that of Owsley or Davidson--toward Jefferson's anti-slavery sentiments and (2) the exceedingly simple attitude of Lytle toward Taylor's dislike of the free Negro.

⁶⁹ Davidson, "The Dilemma of Southern Liberals," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 267.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Jefferson's often-quoted statement that

[t]he whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on one part, and degrading submissions on the other 72

is, in a sense, documented by Warren, for Warren's Brother to Dragons tells the story of a particularly vicious murder of a slave by Jefferson's nephew, a member of the slaveholding class. But the reader may judge that the protagonist and murderer is insane and is thus not a representative member of the Old Southern slaveholding class--as, of course, he is not. Furthermore, R. P. W. (presumably Warren in fact as well as in aesthetic convention) states in the poem, on the one hand, that in this particular family (the Lewis family--Jefferson's sister, Lucy Jefferson Lewis, and her husband, Charles Lewis) the rule had been kindness toward slaves--until, after Lucy's death, her son Lilburn turned vicious.⁷³ This statement, of course, lends no support to the historic Jefferson's strictures on the general effect of slaveholding on master and slave. Two additional points made in Brother to Dragons imply an acquiescence (by an "enlightened" Jefferson) in slavery as no worse than other human institutions--and at the same time a repudiation (by Warren) of the historic Jefferson and his (to Warren) naive belief in the possibility of a society in which human goodness would prevail to a greater extent than it did in Jefferson's time or before. In the first place, Jefferson (who in real life deplored slavery and its degrading influence on the master)

⁷² From Jefferson's "Notes on Virginia," 1781-1782, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, II, 225-226. Quoted in Padover's Thomas Jefferson on Democracy, p. 98.

⁷³ Speech of R. P. W. in Warren's Brother to Dragons, p. 104.

is made, in Warren's poem, into a moral monster who tells his sister Lucy that she should have struck the Negro slave, George, who came to her after he had been beaten by her son Lilburn.⁷⁴ In the second place, Warren uses an argument ad hominem (a perfectly legitimate procedure--but its function in Warren's whole strategy should be noted): the sincerity of Jefferson's anti-slavery sentiment is called into question when R. P. W. reminds Jefferson that he lived at Monticello in his last years by the "skill of some colored mechanics" and that, furthermore, the building of

Monticello,
That domed dream of our liberties floating
High on its mountain, like a cloud, demanded
A certain amount of black sweat. ⁷⁵

Finally, although R. P. W. (in the poem) and Warren (in the appendix to the poem) advise the reader that George is not the only Negro who was cruelly handled in Old Kentucky,⁷⁶ the net effect of Jefferson's speeches in the poem is to equate the evils perpetrated under slavery with the evils inevitably perpetrated by Americans living in times and places untouched by chattel slavery.⁷⁷ Whether murder occurs in battle or in the courtroom, in the Wilderness at Bloody Angle or the Bloody Pond--in Boston or in Chicago, to Jefferson it is the same kind

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

⁷⁶ See R. P. W.'s speech on p. 136 of ibid. and Warren's note on pp. 220-221 of ibid.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Jefferson's remarks on pp. 135-137 of ibid.

of murder which took place in the meat-house on the estate of Jefferson's brother-in-law, and it is not worth the expenditure of moral indignation: "let them scream," Jefferson remarks rather cynically, "All's one in the common collusion." There is force in the fictitious Jefferson's view here--and the view may have the pragmatic value of making readers aware that America has not abolished racial and social oppression with the abolition of slavery. But there is also the danger that an overwhelming sense of the evil in the human heart--including a constant awareness of "How vanity and blood-lust may link obscenely/In the excuse of moral ardor, and a cause"⁷⁸--may freeze the will of the potential social reformer. (Someone should tell Warren that not every attempt to open a swimming-pool to Negroes is prompted by vanity and blood-lust.) Jefferson, as he appears in Warren's poem, has suffered an attack of moral paralysis. Had the abolitionists acted upon the assumptions of Warren's Jefferson, they would never have pressed vigorously for the emancipation of slaves. And should Warren's image of Jefferson supplant the popular American image of the liberal Jefferson, twentieth-century reformers would be deprived of an incarnate ideal they have lived by.

John Taylor of Caroline offers to Lytle, the Vanderbilt Traditionalist who has discussed Taylor most fully, none of the problems which a discussion of Jefferson's anti-slavery sentiments offers to other Vanderbilt Traditionalists. Taylor, as pictured by Lytle, is a willing racist--with none of Jefferson's

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 136-137.

desire to "see . . . proofs . . . that nature has given to our black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colors of men";⁷⁹ none of Jefferson's willingness to admit that his "doubts [as to the Negro's capacity] were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of [his] . . . own State, where the opportunities for the development of their genius were not favorable, and those of exercising it still less so";⁸⁰ and none of Jefferson's insistence that "whatever be their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights."⁸¹ Lytle is able to apply to the Negro in the South today Taylor's invidious remarks on the free Negro.

In fact, exhibit A in the evidence for Tate's contention, on one occasion, that a slavery worse than the black bondage of the Old South afflicts both the Negro race and the white race in the twentieth century⁸² might well be Andrew Nelson Lytle-- whose remarks on lynching in 1934 showed him to be a mind enslaved by the pro-slavery argument. Lytle's remarks were offered as an application to contemporary America of John Taylor's diagnosis of and prescription for improper relations between the races. The gist of Lytle's argument is that lynching is a necessary cure for the social disorder resulting when "mischievous

⁷⁹ Jefferson to Benjamin Banneker, August 30, 1791, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, VIII, 241. Quoted by Padover on p. 101 of Thomas Jefferson on Democracy.

⁸⁰ Jefferson to Henri Grégoire, February 25, 1809, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, XII, 255. Quoted by Padover on p. 101 of Thomas Jefferson on Democracy.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 273.

opinions" raise "false hopes among certain members of the subordinate race."⁸³ Taylor was far-sighted enough to see that the free Negro can be a "nuisance to society," Lytle declares. Because Lytle's opinions should be more widely known by those who may find the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' (or Agrarians') views on class and culture "profound," I quote at some length from this purple passage in Lytle's article: The free Negro, Taylor says (according to Lytle's paraphrase),

has freedom without position or property. This renders him open to any mischievous influence and increases pilfering. He interferes with the accepted form of labour [slavery] and makes it dissatisfied with its lot. Taylor advocated removal by colonization or by more desperate measures. ⁸⁴

Lytle goes on to show the applicability of some of Taylor's insights to present-day society:

The fact that labour took the form of personal slavery in Taylor's time does not completely invalidate his directions on this matter. The Negro is free, if you like; but he is still a Negro. This fact means that the fundamental relationship between the races is unchanged. His position now is subordinate whereas

⁸³ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 443. It should be noted that Lytle does not include in his article anything which shows that Taylor could on occasion be aware of the contradiction between his liberal principles and his acquiescence in slavery. Lytle does not cite any passage like the following, which I quote from p. 65 of Taylor's Inquiry: "Had Sancho known of a paper stock system, he would not have wished for the government of an island inhabited by negroes. Has Providence used this system to avenge the Africans, upon the Europeans and Americans?" The focus of Taylor's satire in the first of these sentences, is, of course, the aristocracy of paper and patronage. But an awareness of the moral evil of slavery is implied in the second sentence.

⁸⁴ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 442.

formerly it was servile, but it is questionable whether he had gained by the change. He owns property, but he has no political power to insure this ownership. A great body of his race works on the farms of the dominant race. Any outside influence which stirs up trouble makes him inefficient as a labourer, and makes successful farming doubtful. The Communist Party and all such factions who aim to upset the status quo stand in the shoes of the Abolitionists and free Negroes of the days of the old Union. They cannot be disciplined because they stand without the jurisdiction of the Southern governments; but their agents in the South can and should be dealt with, with the greatest severity. The Southern governments have failed in this, and they are suffering from their impotency. They fail to act because they fear outside opinion. The relative position of the races is tacitly accepted; it should be openly stated. The increase in lynching stems indirectly from this. ⁸⁵

By this time, Lytle has, one gathers, left John Taylor far behind him, but Lytle's ideas on lynching are interesting whatever their source--and the fact that he cites Taylor as his inspiration makes the ideas relevant to our study. He continues:

It is a sign that governments are refusing to function on a matter vital to the states--not because they fail to apprehend and punish the lynchers but because they have countenanced mischievous opinions which have raised false hopes among certain members of the subordinate race. Mobs in civilized states are the more responsible citizens resuming delegated functions of government because their agents failed to exercise these functions. Mass action of this sort is always an act of selfpreservation. It

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 442-443.

indicates that race integrity must not be tampered with. 86

At the conclusion of his digression on lynching, Lytle in effect serves notice that, so far as he is concerned, he intends to make no concessions on anything affecting the South:

it is one purpose of the essay to show that Southern interests, customs, economics, and problems have been, still are, and will be, fundamentally the same. The character of its people, its soil and climate, its geography, its history, and its relations to the other sections have determined this. To ignore it is to beckon disaster with both hands; and disaster does not always fall below the Mason and Dixon Line, as the rest of this continent has learned. 87

So much for John Taylor's eternal verities on the South--verities which Lytle adapts to his own purposes.

So violent are Lytle's statements of the early thirties that they may lead one to question how Tate--who has shown less

86 Ibid., p. 443. Andrew Lytle may have been affected by changing public opinion during the last twenty years. Lytle's review of Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust indicates that Lytle can now at least admire the Southern boy, Charles Mallison, who helps to frustrate a lynching. One of the impulses ascribed by Lytle to Charles is the desire to "avoid the shame of lynching that attaches to any mob action, since this is [a] . . . kind of emasculation both for the individual and society." Lynching, which seemed to Lytle in the 1930's a necessary action when outside agitators stirred up the subordinate race, is now presented by Lytle as a "society's subversion of its laws." See Andrew Nelson Lytle's "Regeneration for the Man" [a review of William Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust] in Sewanee Review, LVII (Winter, 1949), 122. My query: Is it possible that agitators for civil rights in the South have in the last twenty years exercised a moral pressure conducive to Mr. Lytle's own regeneration? Lytle would probably rather die than say "yes" to this query--for on the same page on which he presents sympathetically the Southern boy who prevents a lynching, Lytle grinds the old axe about the North's being responsible for the exacerbated character of race relations in the South. See ibid.

87 Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 443.

mean-mindedness on the race question than Lytle has--could perhaps have felt a sense of "communion"⁸⁸ with Lytle. A brief sampling of Tate's comments in the late twenties and early thirties may suggest the extent of his agreement with Lytle's application of Taylor's principles to the problem of lynching. In his writings of the period before 1935, Tate's exacerbated sectionalism leads him to attribute lynching to conditions entirely beyond the control of the lynchers. Thus Tate smugly implies that violence toward the Negro after the Civil War was caused by Northern interference with the Negro: as if in extenuation of such violence as was a concomitant of slave-trading before the war, Tate points out that "Lynching came after the Civil War, when the Negroes had been stirred to violence by the Northern whites."⁸⁹ And when he speaks of lynching in his own time, Tate gives a very naturalistic explanation of its causes. "The recent outburst of lynching in the South," he remarks in amoral tones, quite uncolored by any sense of Southerners' personal responsibility for violations of order, "is probably due to three factors: Communist agitation, which deludes the Negro into believing that he can better his condition by crime; general economic fear and instability taking the form of mob violence; and outside interference in the trials of accused Negroes."⁹⁰ Tate's diagnosis of the lynching disease differs

⁸⁸ Davidson uses this term to characterize the relation of some of the 'original Agrarians of I'll Take My Stand. See Donald Davidson, "The 'Mystery' of the Agrarians: Facts and Illusions about Some Southern Writers," Saturday Review of Literature, XXVI (January, 1943), 6.

⁸⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 42.

⁹⁰ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 426.

not a great deal from Lytle's--but Tate does not trace his view of the Negro problem to John Taylor, nor does he prescribe a violent cure.

Primogeniture and Entail

On the subject of Jefferson's attitude toward primogeniture, Lytle has again been exceedingly explicit. Equal to Jefferson's sin in attacking the Established Church was his sin in helping to abolish primogeniture, says Lytle. Lytle insists that Jefferson's attack on primogeniture defeated his own ends: Jefferson, according to Lytle, "hoped to produce a stable farming society, predominantly yeoman." But, in actual practice, Lytle emphasizes,

[m]uch of Jefferson's special legislation--especially the abandonment of primogeniture and the separation of Church and State--contradicted his general idea and obstructed the establishment of the agrarian State. 91

Lytle reproves Jefferson for destroying, in the name of the Declaration of Independence, the institution of primogeniture, which is (according to Lytle) "the strong rock of traditional society."⁹² Lytle deplores the fact that John Taylor did not sufficiently purify himself of the Jeffersonian prejudice against primogeniture. "Liberal [Jeffersonian] abstractions," says Lytle, "forced John Taylor, a large planter and owner of slaves, a thorough aristocrat in tastes and discipline, into calling

⁹¹ Andrew N. Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 415.

⁹² Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 96.

himself the economic familiar of the artisan and clerk of the city." As a corollary of his inconsistent alignment with the "propertyless democracy," Taylor was "deluded . . . into his support of the attack on primogeniture, which would make it impossible for his descendants to continue his way of life."⁹³

Lytle's views on entail and primogeniture are also visible in his discussion of Caroline Gordon's novel, Penhally. Although Lytle does not document his thesis clearly, he maintains that

[t]he matter of the division of family property in Penhally becomes the internal sign of disorder [in Old Southern society at large and in the Llewellyn family in particular], and the action seems to imply that the younger brother who wants his share of the land and a house of his own in part sets in motion the Nemesis of destruction from the outside through the revolution of the Civil War. [sic] ⁹⁴

In a general way, the disintegration of the values underlying the system of primogeniture and entail are Miss Gordon's theme in the novel, Penhally. Lytle, however, despite the complex wording of his interpretation, does not illuminate her handling of this theme. It seems likely that his devotion to the institution of primogeniture is a little too rigid to permit

⁹³ Ibid., p. 97. We may assume that one of the elements which Lytle finds attractive in George Fitzhugh's thought is Fitzhugh's advocacy of primogeniture and entail in order that disturbing social changes might be prevented. For a generally laudatory comment on Fitzhugh, see Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 97-98. For a citation of Fitzhugh's advocacy of primogeniture in his work Slavery Justified (1849), see Wish, George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South, p. 58.

⁹⁴ Andrew Nelson Lytle, "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image," Sewanee Review, LVII (Autumn, 1949), 575. The following passages bear upon the questions of entail or primogeniture: Caroline Gordon, Penhally (New York, 1931), pp. 26, 30, 37, 66, 217, 232-233. Lytle does not cite all these passages.

him to take in Miss Gordon's no less devoted but rather complicated approach to primogeniture and entail.⁹⁵

Tate's position (at least at one stage in his career) on primogeniture and entail can perhaps be surmised from his comment in Jefferson Davis on the Lower South after 1850 as society tended to become "stable." An agrarian class's identification of its power with "inherited responsibility" is, Tate maintains in this book, the "best basis for a society"; and "in the Lower South it produced a genuine ruling class." When he goes on to emphasize that property in the form of a "definite physical legacy"--in this case inherited "land and slaves"--bound the owner with a sense of his social responsibility,⁹⁶ Tate adopts a view of human nature and political economy which is consistent with a conservative rationale for entail, if not for primogeniture.⁹⁷ And Tate's view resembles Alexander Hamilton's more than it does Jefferson's. Although Tate emphasizes the "check" on the "acquisitive instinct"⁹⁸ which (he says) the Lower South's tradition of land ownership and slaveholding provided by 1850 and thereafter, Tate's major

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 55.

⁹⁷ Jefferson, in abolishing entail, was aiming to prevent the "accumulation and perpetuation of wealth"; in abolishing primogeniture, he helped to remove "feudal . . . distinctions" which made "one member of every family rich and all the rest poor." From Jefferson's "Autobiography," The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, I, 73. Quoted in Saul K. Padover's Jefferson (New York, 1942), p. 82.

⁹⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 55.

assumption about the relation of human selfishness to social order is a Hamiltonian assumption.⁹⁹ Jefferson, according to William D. Grampp (a recent student of Jeffersonian economics), "could never agree with Hamilton that the ideal government connected men's 'interests with their virtue,' and secured their loyalty by satisfying their material desires."¹⁰⁰ Tate's rationale of the Lower South's regime would be equally useful to proponents of a mild version of the Hamiltonian state and to upholders of certain forms of the totalitarian state, for the dogma that no institution can modify the ineradicable selfishness of men is a convenient starting-point for the philosophy which rates stability in the social order above all other social values: "Human nature is everywhere the same," Tate affirms,-- and he means that human nature is uniformly selfish, for he continues: "It is only the social system that imposes a check upon the acquisitive instinct, accidentally and as the condition of a certain prosperity, that in the end makes for stability and creates the close ties among all classes which distinguished a

⁹⁹ For a compact statement of the contrast between Hamiltonian cynicism and Jeffersonian hopefulness about the relation of "virtue" (non-destructive behavior or creative behavior) to one's material interests, see William D. Grampp's "A Re-examination of Jeffersonian Economics," Southern Economic Journal, XII (January, 1946), 265, 272-273.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 272.

civilization from a mere social machine."¹⁰¹ In 1929, Tate apparently identified "civilization" with a social order which achieves the kind of stability he saw in the Lower South after 1850--a stability rooted (in the case of the Lower South) in the planter's control over a "definite physical legacy"--land and slaves. Would not entail and primogeniture have been appropriate institutions for guaranteeing the perpetuation of such a "physical legacy" from generation unto generation in a family?¹⁰² Both Tate and his wife (Caroline Gordon) have

¹⁰¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 55-56. The use of the past tense in the verb "distinguished" seems to indicate a particular emphasis upon the Lower South after 1850 as a genuine "civilization." It is entertaining to contrast two of John Taylor's assumptions with Tate's assumptions (in the passage just quoted) about the fixity of human nature and the principle which must inform good institutions:

(1) On p. 38 of his Inquiry, Taylor says that "the moral qualities of human nature are not always the same, but are different both in nations and individuals." (Cf. Tate's statement that "[h]uman nature is everywhere the same.")

(2) On p. 36 of his Inquiry, Taylor says that since "human nature has been perpetually escaping from all forms" and since even those who assert that there is only one natural form "have never been able to agree upon this natural form of government," government must be "capable of unascertained modification and improvement from moral causes." (Cf. the remainder of the quotation from p. 55 of Tate's Jefferson Davis.)

¹⁰² The avowed belief of the Agrarians in the "freedom" of subsistence farmers who own their land is vitiated by somewhat the same limitation that blighted this principle in Jefferson's and Taylor's thought: just as Jefferson and Taylor were discouraged by the institution of slavery from acting fully on their belief that most men should have the right to property and the vote, so have Lytle and Tate been prevented (by their admiration for the "feudal organism" of the slave-owning planter) from giving undivided allegiance to an agrarian society made up of men who are "not subject to economic coercion, and [are] . . . therefore free to exercise their political rights." The term "feudal organism" is used by Lytle in an admiring description of the plantation. See p. 431 of Lytle's "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933). The description of the ideal agrarian society in which men are not subject to "economic coercion" is from Frank Lawrence Owsley's paraphrase of John Taylor's views in Owsley's review of Eugene T. Mudge's The Social Philosophy of John Taylor of Caroline. See p. 19 of this review in Free America, IV (February, 1940).

provided fictional images of the social flux which the breakdown of entail occasioned in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Virginia.¹⁰³ Possibly Tate wishes that some institution equivalent to entail might have functioned in the Lower South after 1850 to encourage the combination of inherited responsibility and inherited property--a combination to which (as we have just seen) Tate attributed the trend toward stability in that part of the South.

In contrast to Lytle and Tate, Owsley has put himself on record as being unequivocally in favor of Jefferson's fight against entail and primogeniture. Apparently he views these policies as vicious--at least for Jefferson's time, for he comments as follows:

Jefferson was thoroughly familiar with the destruction of the yeomanry in England by the entail, primogeniture, and the Enclosure Acts. Tidewater Virginia was in his day rapidly developing into a country not unlike England which Goldsmith was describing as a land "where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Owsley seems to be delighted with the fact that, under Jefferson's leadership, the "laws of primogeniture and entail were abolished, with the result that a redistribution of landed property took place not unlike that which resulted from the French Revolution."¹⁰⁴

IV. POSITIVE PROPOSALS MADE BY JEFFERSON

Wide Ownership of Land

Even though Tate and Lytle show little enthusiasm for

¹⁰³ Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review (Autumn, 1934), 87; Gordon, Penhally, 37.

¹⁰⁴ Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? p. 63.

Jefferson's attacks on the established church, primogeniture, and entail and even though none of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists is attracted to Jefferson's extreme criticism of slavery, a case can still be made out that these gentlemen sympathize with Jefferson's economic democracy insofar as it supports the wide ownership of land by white people. (Owsley went so far as to remark in "The Pillars of Agrarianism" that the majority of the Agrarians were willing to see Negroes who proved themselves responsible become landowners.)¹⁰⁵

John Crowe Ransom was one of the first Vanderbilt Traditionalists to make direct application of the agrarian aspect of Jefferson's program to twentieth-century America. His articles recommending more subsistence farming, supplemented with a minimum of cash cropping by the subsistence farmer, appeared in the early thirties.¹⁰⁶ Among the means Ransom

¹⁰⁵ Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," American Review, IV (March, 1935), 536. See also Robert Penn Warren's "The Briar Patch," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 261-264; and Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 425. Both Warren and Tate are glad to see responsible Negroes own land. Donald Davidson, however, takes a dim view of plans to facilitate land ownership by numbers of Negroes in areas having a large Negro population. Sociologist Arthur Raper's plan for aiding Negroes to purchase small pieces of land is, says Davidson, "the new form of abolitionism"--a "manoeuvre . . . to set up the Negro as an equal, or at least more than a subordinate member of Southern society." See Donald Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 199-202.

¹⁰⁶ The following articles by Ransom set forth the advantages of subsistence farming: "The State and the Land," New Republic, LXX (February 17, 1932), 8-10; "Land!" Harper's CLXV (July, 1932), 216-224; and "Happy Farmers," American Review, I (October, 1933), 513-535.

suggested for promoting a revival of subsistence farming were the Danish plan whereby the government financed the "purchase of land for the indigent purchasers"¹⁰⁷ or a plan (based on American experience) whereby the state would "buy up and keep on hand a great deal of land, which [in the thirties was] . . . plentiful and cheap, for homesteading." A good feature of the latter plan, according to Ransom, was that the state "could satisfy itself . . . that the land was being occupied for genuine agrarian purposes, not for money-cropping."¹⁰⁸ This brings us to the distinction between the character and intent of the proposals in regard to land ownership made by Jefferson and the proposals made by the Vanderbilt Traditionalists. Whereas Jefferson's objectives were, according to one student, "equality, or the elimination of gross inequality of possession, and freedom in the use of the land,"¹⁰⁹ Ransom's (and some of the other Vanderbilt Traditionalists') objectives seem to be the establishment of that stable peasant foundation which every society needs if it is to be a traditional society--that is a society in which there is a minimum of change.¹¹⁰

The proposals of Frank Lawrence Owsley provide more

¹⁰⁷ Ransom, "The State and the Land," New Republic, LXX (February 17, 1932), 10.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Grampp, "A Re-examination of Jeffersonian Economics," Southern Economic Journal, XII (January, 1946), 273.

¹¹⁰ For one component of this idea, see p. 273 of Tate's "The Profession of Letters in the South" in On the Limits of Poetry: "All great cultures have been rooted in peasantries, in free peasantries, I believe, such as the English yeomanry before the fourteenth century."

specifically than do those of Ransom for a society in which the use of land would be restricted in such a way as to make unlikely the movement of men toward greater wealth. In his article "The Pillars of Agrarianism," Owsley makes the un-Jeffersonian recommendation that a modified feudal system of fines and escheats, together with laws making alienation of the land practically impossible, be used to guarantee that the individuals who, with state aid, are established on small plots of land use their property in accordance with the state's orders.¹¹¹ It is amusing to find Patrick Quinn trying to relieve Owsley's plan of the onus of the word "feudal." As if Owsley's critics were naive enough to think Owsley desires a literal restoration of "monarchial-aristocratic society, with its structure of lords, vassals, and serfs," Quinn says of Owsley's semi-feudal plan of fines, escheats, and conditional ownership: "The services and duties he refers to are hardly such impositions as fealty and homage."¹¹² Quinn thus diverts attention from the possibility that the "impositions" under Owsley's system might be quite as restrictive as fealty and homage.

It must not be supposed that Tate has on every occasion unequivocally damned Jefferson, the egalitarian. In fact Tate has sometimes employed Jeffersonian phrases as means of passing judgment on (and consigning to damnation) certain tendencies

¹¹¹ Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," American Review, IV (March, 1935), 546.

¹¹² Quinn, "Agrarianism and the Jeffersonian Philosophy," Review of Politics, II (January, 1940), 101.

he sees in twentieth-century America. In 1938, when he was reviewing Herbert Agar's interpretation of American history and the Jeffersonian tradition, Tate confessed his inability to see in American society anything other than a "plutocratic régime masked as democracy."¹¹³ In a violent indictment of the United States for its total failure to put Jeffersonian ideals into practice, Tate declared that "not many of us . . . will disagree" with democracy's enemies (those holding the "swastika" or those holding the "hammer") who believe that "fascism or communism would in the long run be better than the hypocritical pretense of democracy that we live under today."¹¹⁴ At this point, Tate reached for Jeffersonian accents. Admitting that the phrase "'Equal rights for all, special privileges for none'" is hard to interpret--that it would mean different things in the thirteenth century or under Oliver Cromwell, Tate was nevertheless sure of its meaning for the United States: "under the conditions of settlement and development of the American people it can mean only a single thing," Tate declared in one of the most liberal statements he has ever made; and for once he was fairly explicit: "[i]t means, on the governmental side, policies that would give to a great majority of the people equal access to the natural resources of a new country." These policies, Tate went on to say, were defeated by the Hamiltonians, making us a poor country,

¹¹³ Allen Tate, [Review of The Pursuit of Happiness: The Story of American Democracy, by Herbert Agar], Free America, II (October, 1938), 17.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

for, said Tate, "no nation is richer than the majority of its people." Criticizing by implication the ruling class of the "plutocratic régime" under which he thought the country was suffering in 1938, Tate emphasized that the phrase "'Equal rights for all and special privileges for none'"

means, on the economic side, a system of property in which ownership is so widely distributed that the owners do not merely clip coupons under a red umbrella on the Riviera, but are compelled to exert responsible moral control over that portion of the means of production that they happen to own. 115

What appears to be the most "democratic" element in Tate's Jeffersonian image--that is, the element seemingly predicated on respect for the "common man"--is Tate's willingness to see a large number of people exercising cultivators' privileges and duties on the land. (The unanimity of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists on this aspect of the Jeffersonian heritage is of course patent in the label "Agrarians" which the Vanderbilt writers adopted.) Even Donald Davidson, the white supremacist and anti-humanitarian,¹¹⁶ claims to be a Jeffersonian on the issue of wide ownership of land. Davidson insists that the I'll-Take-My-Standers pushed "the large plantation into the background of consideration" and "followed Jefferson" in

115 Ibid.

116 For evidence that these labels fit Davidson, see Davidson's article "Preface to Decision" in Sewanee Review, LIII (July-September, 1945), 394-412.

arguing the "case of the yeoman farmer."¹¹⁷ He even says they were "rather critical of the plantation."¹¹⁸ And, elsewhere, he gives sympathetic attention to Herbert Agar's analysis of the incompatibility between "the native democratic tradition, which, sustained by a society based upon agriculture and widely distributed property, could still secure liberty to the people" and the "Hamiltonian, or European, tradition of plutocracy and big business."¹¹⁹ This, like Tate's remarks on another book by Agar, sounds fairly respectful of the common man. We should keep in mind, however, Tate's remark in Stonewall Jackson about Calhoun's arguing "justly that only in a society of fixed

¹¹⁷ Davidson, "'I'll Take My Stand': A History," American Review, V (Summer, 1935), 312. Compare Davidson's statement with the following passage from Stark Young's "Not in Memoriam, But in Defense" in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 336-337: "At the outset we must make it clear that in talking of Southern characteristics we are talking largely of a certain life in the old South, a life founded on land and the ownership of slaves. Of the other people living in the South of that epoch we know less, the people who worked their own farms with their own hands, respectable and sturdy, a fine yeomanry partly, and partly the so-called poor whites, who were more shiftless or less self-respecting. They had certain pioneer virtues, common on all our frontiers, and they sometimes, doubtless, reflected certain traits from the planter class; but it is not they who gave this civilization its peculiar stamp It is true, even at this day in the South, that the manners and customs of the South do not wholly arise from the bottom mass; they have come from the top downward. It is true that our traditional Southern characteristics derive from the landed class." These remarks do not indicate that Young would like to revive chattel slavery but neither do they reassure us that he would not acquiesce in its modern equivalent.

¹¹⁸ Davidson, "'I'll Take My Stand': A History," American Review, V (Summer, 1935), 312.

¹¹⁹ Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 94. Davidson is paraphrasing an idea in Herbert Agar's Land of the Free.

classes can men be free."¹²⁰ And we should not fail to note that Lytle and Owsley, both of whom profess a Jeffersonian agrarianism, seem to think that the permanent fixing of many men on the land is at least as important to society as is the granting to many men of property in land. The proper cultivation of the land and the stability of the social order (both legitimate, objectives, I would admit--though not necessarily the highest ends to which all others must always be sacrificed) seem to be more important objectives to Lytle and Owsley than is the intellectual and political development of the individual man-on-the-land. There seem to be few if any grounds for concluding that the Vanderbilt Traditionalists would--given an agrarian society--be metamorphosed into democrats in the sense that they would believe that (1) the bulk of mankind may develop talents and virtues fitting them for intelligent political activity and (2) every individual may choose his occupation and find his place in society. There is reason to suspect that Tate and Lytle, at least, would prefer to have the bulk of mankind inherit their occupations from their peasant-parents.

Lytle supplies additional grounds relative to this suspicion. He is probably stating the entelechy of his agrarianism when he remarks that "no state is secure unless it has a sturdy agricultural body to rest upon, and the agriculture of a people is rarely secure unless the cultivators work continuously the same acreage."¹²¹ Lytle's "agrarianism"--that is, his belief

¹²⁰ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

¹²¹ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 436.

that a sizable proportion of the population should cultivate gardens--is a doctrine which can comfortably house parts of the pro-slavery argument alongside praise for medieval and twentieth-century labor and landholding systems. In his views on social classes, Lytle is, to say the least, quite conservative. He contends that the "personal slavery of [John] Taylor's day had the great virtue of fixing the worker to the soil and defining the relationship between master and man." Any humanitarianism implied in Lytle's desire for an agrarian state should be measured against his regret over the loss, following the Civil War, of this "virtue" characteristic of the slavery regime. "The loss of this [that is, the success of slavery in fixing the worker to the soil and defining the relationship between master and man] has done farming incalculable damage,"¹²² Lytle complains. Shedding his ante-bellum cloak for a medieval garment, Lytle can, upon occasion, emphasize that the "conservatism natural to all land-living people" gave the Americans of Taylor's time a good opportunity to preserve the "European" tradition,¹²³ which Lytle, unlike Davidson, identifies (honorifically) with the feudal establishment of the Middle Ages.¹²⁴ Those who would exempt Lytle from the charge that he advocates modern equivalents of slavery or of feudal modes of binding the agricultural worker to the soil might cite Lytle's statements

¹²² Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 439.

¹²³ Ibid., (October, 1934), 633.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 631-632.

to the effect that "[b]ulking large in any agrarian state, there must always be the small, independent farmer."¹²⁵ This is a disarming sentiment, but it will hardly disarm the democrat who has noted the praise of Lytle for labor systems entirely unconcerned with the laborer's personal development and social freedom. "The amount of freedom to be expected in this world is extremely limited," Lytle says, and he adds that "[a]bout this there is little to be done, just as there is little to be done about the time and place of birth, marriage, or death." But though Lytle does not hold out much hope for an increase of freedom, he can weep heartily over the "loss" of some mysterious entity which he calls the "feudal independence" of man in medieval Europe.¹²⁶

Education

Of the two positive conditions which Jefferson hoped would make the ordinary man a wise participant in representative government, the second measure--publicly supported education--has not received from any of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists the plaudits which some Vanderbilt Traditionalists accorded to the first condition--land ownership for a large number of the people. We cannot discuss in any detail here Tate's allusions to the low state of the public intelligence--allusions which have occasionally been so contemptuous as almost to imply that literacy in the masses is a curse to the society. (For example

¹²⁵ Ibid., (September, 1934), 439.

¹²⁶ Ibid., (October, 1934), 631.

in 1925, the hot young Tate attacked Ernest Boyd for "ridiculing a group of young men [artists such as Tate had just come to know in New York] who wouldn't exactly meet Defoe's requirement of being understood of the people."¹²⁷ Two years later, a more circumspect Mr. Tate wondered, in a perhaps deceptively detached manner, whether Sir Osbert Burdett--with his "discredited" notion of an "esoteric" literature and its corollary, "illiteracy for the masses"--was a "reactionary" or a "prophet."¹²⁸ Entertaining as Mr. Tate's laments on the intelligence of the masses are, we must not pursue them, for our main business is with explicit comments by Vanderbilt Traditionalists on Jefferson's plan of publicly supported education for the masses.

¹²⁷ Tate declared: "Mr. Boyd saw into the prejudices of the great hordes that swarm the plain from Wisconsin to the Gulf of Mexico [He] has enabled those people to feel pleasantly superior to the one thing they like most to feel superior to--what they can't understand." Tate, [Correspondence], Aesthete 1925, no. 1 (February, 1925), p. 10. An unsigned "advertisement" (headed "Menckenise!") on page 33 of this magazine flayed the policy of H. L. Mencken's American Mercury, which had published the offending article by Ernest Boyd. The advertisement read as follows: "Can't you understand modern art? Let Mencken show you the absurdity of the Ku Klux Klan. Can't you follow modern philosophy? Let Mencken snigger with you at William Jennings Bryan." Ibid., p. 33. The article which provoked this single issue of Aesthete 1925 was Ernest Boyd's "Aesthete: Model 1924," American Mercury, I (January, 1924), 51-56.

¹²⁸ Tate, "Reactionary or Prophet" [review of Sir Osbert Burdett's Critical Essays], New Republic, LI (June 8, 1927), 80. Cf. John Peale Bishop, "Obscurity: Observations and Aphorisms," Western Review, XII (Winter, 1948), 72: "There is an intimate connection between modern universal literacy and the obscurity of modern literature."

See also the acid remarks by the narrator of Lytle's novel A Name for Evil (Indianapolis, 1947), pp. 12-13: "The unique triumph of universal education is the successful way it debases the mind. Besides making the ignorant arrogant, this spun sugar of our political carnival has corrupted manners."

The writings of Donald Davidson and John Gould Fletcher furnish such comments. (Fletcher's connection with the Vanderbilt Traditionalists consists in his having contributed to I'll Take My Stand an article on "Education, Past and Present.")¹²⁹ Both Davidson and Fletcher emphasize that Jefferson's scheme aimed to select the superior student and educate him. Efforts are made to dissociate the modern system of universal public education from Jefferson's scheme. "It was ignorance, no doubt, that made [Walter Hines] Page assume that the modern program of universal compulsory education was identical with Jefferson's old scheme for selective education,"¹³⁰ Davidson says rather tartly.

John Gould Fletcher goes further than Davidson in documenting his allegation that Jefferson's plan was for selective rather than universal education. Equal education for all, except on the most elementary level, is a consummation devoutly to be

¹²⁹ John Gould Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," I'll Take My Stand, pp. 92-121.

¹³⁰ Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 278. It is of course true that Jefferson hesitated to make education compulsory, but it is misleading to emphasize the selective feature of his program, and not to mention his desire to educate the children of common men to be intelligent citizens. An admirer of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists--Richmond C. Beatty--has taken his stand on the side of selective rather than universal education. Beatty notes smugly in an article on Bayard Taylor that "a later and more chastened wisdom than Bayard Taylor's has rather roundly established the lamentable truth that his ideal of universal education cannot arrest in mankind the impulse of selfishness, cannot commend nobility in any sweeter way to his contemplation, is indeed usually wasted upon that wretched creature." Richmond C. Beatty, "A Mind Divided: Bayard Taylor as a Critic of America," American Review, III (April, 1934), 95.

deplored, Fletcher thinks: "The agitation for free public schools began as early as the Revolution," Fletcher records, with regret, "and its progress, though halted by the common feeling of the people themselves, was rapid and in the end disastrously complete." As to the responsibility of Jefferson for the disastrously complete success of this agitation for public schools in American, Fletcher has this to say:

It is generally supposed that the parent of this agitation was no less a person than Thomas Jefferson. A careful examination, however, of the famous "bill for a more general diffusion of knowledge" which he introduced into the Virginia Legislature as early as 1779, will suffice to dispel the illusion that Jefferson was aiming at education for all members of the community.

Fletcher quotes from Jefferson's bill and concludes that what Jefferson wanted was "practically such a system of competitive scholarships for the poorer classes as prevails today in England and other European countries." Finally, Fletcher summarizes Jefferson's proposals submitted to the Virginia Legislature in 1797 and remarks that a "brief examination of these proposals would suffice to dispel the illusion that the modern advocates of free education for all can claim an ally in Thomas Jefferson."¹³¹

¹³¹ Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," in *I'll Take My Stand*, pp. 104-105. Cf. Frank L. Owsley, "Two Agrarian Philosophers Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours," *Hound and Horn*, VI (October-December, 1932), 170: "The notion that every young man and woman must have a college education is most distinctly not Jeffersonian." Owsley probably misjudges the Jeffersonian liberals today if he thinks they recommend a college education for those whose interests and capacities lie in other directions. Owsley also misjudges the Old South's capacity for diffusing pro-slavery propaganda if he thinks that only the industrial state can vitiate the work of education. Of Jefferson, Owsley declares: "He could not foresee how organized propaganda, skillfully directed, would render useless even University training in aiding the citizen to form an intelligent opinion on public questions. Jefferson's reply to any such criticism could he make one, would most likely be that no such organized propaganda could have been carried on in an agrarian state such as he expected America to remain." Ibid.

Fletcher (like Richard Weaver in Ideas Have Consequences)¹³² gives an accurate picture of one of Jefferson's educational objectives--the discovery and training of all the superior minds, whether of rich or poor families. Fletcher and Weaver rightly imply that Jefferson did not oppose structure in a society--on the contrary, Jefferson supported the idea of an aristocracy of talent and virtue, in the sense that he thought society would benefit from having good and wise men in positions of responsibility. One aim of Jefferson's educational plan is, Weaver says, "sorting out according to gifts and attainments."¹³³ The trouble with Fletcher's and Weaver's sketch of Jefferson's educational plan is, however, the fact that they ignore the second of Jefferson's objectives--"to diffuse knowledge more generally through the mass of the people."¹³⁴ Reviewing in Notes on Virginia the objects of his early education bill for his state, Jefferson emphasized that "of all the views of this law none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty."¹³⁵ In the three years of public schooling which Jefferson proposed should be available to all children, the reading was to be "chiefly historical." The main

¹³² Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 41.

¹³³ In a chapter on the ravages of egalitarianism in modern culture, Weaver remarks that "Thomas Jefferson, after his long apostleship to radicalism, made it the labor of his old age to create an educational system which would be the means of sorting out according to gifts and attainments." Ibid.

¹³⁴ The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Bergh, II, 203.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

purpose of this education was to train the people to choose their governmental representatives wisely and to watch them well.¹³⁶ That three years of reading, writing, and arithmetic could prepare a citizen for exercising with intelligence his part in self-government was perhaps a naive delusion (even admitting that the society of Jefferson's day was less complex than ours today);¹³⁷ but, naive or not, it was Jefferson's idea, and Fletcher (as well as Davidson) is misleading when he denies that Jefferson was for universal education.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

¹³⁷ Owsley says that Jefferson "probably overestimated the efficacy of education in preserving free government." Owsley, "Two Agrarian Philosophers: Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours," Hound and Horn, VI (October-December, 1932), 170.

¹³⁸ That John Taylor, like Jefferson, claimed that printing and education had changed the balance of power from a hereditary aristocracy to the masses of man and to such leaders as might rise by a combination of ability, effort and virtue is indicated by the following quotations from Taylor's Inquiry:

(1) "No certain state of knowledge, is a natural or unavoidable quality of man. As to an intellectual or moral quality, it may be created, destroyed, and modified by human power" The argument that a perpetual or hereditary aristocracy is founded in nature is fallacious for it overlooks the fact that knowledge or ignorance (conditions subject to human control) affect the development of superior abilities. "The peerage of knowledge or abilities, in consequence of its enlargement by the effects of printing, can no longer be collected and controlled in the shape of a noble order or a legislative department. The great body of this peerage must remain scattered throughout every nation, by the enjoyment of the benefit of the press." Taylor, Inquiry, p. 41.

(2) "Until knowledge and virtue shall become genealogical, they cannot be the causes of inheritable aristocracy." Ibid., p. 42.

(3) "Talent and virtue are now so widely distributed, as to have rendered a monopoly of either, equivalent to that of antiquity, impracticable; and if an aristocracy ought to have existed, whilst it possessed such a monopoly, it ought not also to exist [now], because this monopoly is irretrievably lost." Ibid., p. 57.

When Fletcher gets around to discussing the education of Negroes, his remarks sound like a twentieth-century echo of Tate's report (in Jefferson Davis) on some Old Southerners' ideas about the prevention of education among the lower classes. Tate notes that Jefferson Davis and his wife, "visiting friends in Maine, were shocked to find in their household a girl from a poor and illiterate family, educated, they said, beyond her station in a way which could not fail to bring her unhappiness in later life." And without stating whether he himself is an "unreconstructed Southerner," Tate adds that "unreconstructed Southerners to-day point out that the educated Negro is in much the same plight as the Maine servant girl."¹³⁹ Among the reasons for Fletcher's disapproval of universal public high school education and widespread college education for Negroes is a sophisticated version of the Old Southern notion that it does no good to educate people above their station:

Although there is no doubt that the negro could, if he wished, pass easily through the high school and college mill (such a task does not require any profound knowledge of self or determination of mind), yet under the present social and economic conditions under which he has to live it is simply a waste of money and effort to send him there, ¹⁴⁰

Fletcher insists. Fletcher apparently accepts as an absolute the present social and economic environment. At any rate, he has no faith in the power of education to ameliorate the social and economic environment of the Negroes who get it. (In the twenty years since Fletcher wrote this essay, higher education has helped some Negroes to live better, I believe.) As an

¹³⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 37.

¹⁴⁰ Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 119.

alternative to the widespread education of Negroes in integrated, publicly supported high schools and colleges, Fletcher recommends the support of private Negro schools which have stressed the trades and crafts: we can support "such institutions for training the negro as Tuskegee and Hampton Institute, which are adapted to the capacity of that race and produce far healthier specimens of it than all the institutions for 'higher learning' that we can ever give them."¹⁴¹ Fletcher's readers may wonder whether this proposal was aimed at stabilizing the Negro as a class at that place in the economic and social fabric which, by and large, he occupied in the early thirties--that is, in the manual occupations. Would Fletcher today see no virtue in the recent tendencies to allow the individual Negro to "find his place" in any job for which talent and training have prepared him?

V. CONTEMPORARY DEVILS ATTACKED BY JEFFERSON AND TAYLOR

The Aristocracy of Paper and Patronage

The final key to Tate's and Lytle's image of Jefferson may lie in their reactions to the contemporary devils that Jefferson and Taylor thought were responsible for the political and economic miseries of the late eighteenth, and the early nineteenth, century. These devils were, we may recall, monarchy and the "system of paper and patronage"¹⁴²--that is, the plutocracy.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁴² Taylor, Inquiry, p. 67.

Tate, Lytle, Owsley and Davidson have all expressed their belief that the second of these devils (plutocracy) is very much alive in twentieth-century America and that he is at the root of the nation's difficulties.

One illustration of Tate's attack on the plutocracy has already been cited. That kind of property ownership which consists merely in clipping coupons under a red umbrella on the Riviera¹⁴³ gives the owner an irresponsible and unmerited kind of power, Tate has said on a number of occasions. His most complete statement of this idea is found in his essay "Notes on Liberty and Property," which was published in 1936 in Who Owns America?¹⁴⁴ In this essay Tate proceeds to make an indictment of the corporate system:

The liberty of power is the only kind possible in the corporate system. But liberty in the true sense is grossly caricatured when it is replaced by the mere possibility of power over our fellow man. Even that kind of liberty is denied to the great masses, who have no power at all. 145

¹⁴³ Tate [Review of The Pursuit of Happiness, by Herbert Agar], Free America, II (October, 1938), 17.

¹⁴⁴ Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 81-93. This article advocates that the "majority of men" should "own small units of production, whether factories or farms," in order that the majority may subsist without either preying upon, or being preyed upon, by others. Tate implies that the modern corporate system divides society into a mass of slaves and a few irresponsible masters. The large corporation, Tate suggests, gives a few men absolute power and the mass of employees no power whatsoever. Nowhere in the large corporation has one the "opportunity to survive economically without exercising power over others" or, conversely, having inordinate power exercised over oneself. Ibid., pp. 92-93.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

Tate thus confirms and deplors the triumph of the finance-capitalist, the modern equivalent of the aristocrat of paper and patronage whom Taylor attacked.

To turn to Frank L. Owsley's comment on the plutocratic society which Jefferson and Taylor described: in a review of The Social Philosophy of John Taylor by Eugene T. Mudge, Owsley explicitly mentions as one of Taylor's fears which has been fulfilled the fact that the "wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of a few whose power over government has too often been demonstrated."¹⁴⁶ Owsley also cites, in another article, Du Pont de Nemours' remark to Jefferson that industrialism creates two classes--slavish, weak laborers and a "few capitalists," who get hold of the wealth.¹⁴⁷

Andrew Nelson Lytle enjoys to the fullest John Taylor's indictment of the plutocracy, even though (as has already been pointed out) Lytle cannot approve of Taylor's identifying himself with exploited artisans and clerks. As if he were himself a believer in majority rule, Lytle rejoices in Taylor's satiric "confession" of the "aristocracy of paper and patronage."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Owsley, [Review of The Social Philosophy of John Taylor of Caroline, by Eugene T. Mudge], Free America, IV (February, 1940), 19.

¹⁴⁷ Owsley, "Two Agrarian Philosophers: Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours" [review of The Correspondence of Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours, ed. Gilbert Chinard; Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, ed. Dumas Malone; and The Educational Work of Thomas Jefferson, by Roy J. Honeywell], Hound and Horn, VI (October-December, 1932), 168.

¹⁴⁸ John Taylor as quoted in Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 421.

The criminal intentions to which Lytle would have the aristocracy of paper and patronage confess are as follows:

"Our purpose is to settle wealth and power upon a minority. It will be accomplished by national debt, paper corporations, and offices, civil and military. These will condense king, lords and commons, a monied faction, and an armed faction, in one interest. This interest must subsist upon another, or perish. The other interest is national, to govern and pilfer which, is our object; and its accomplishment consists in getting the utmost a nation can pay. Such a state of success can only be maintained by armies, to be paid by the nation, and commanded by this minority; by corrupting talents and courage; by terrifying timidity; by inflicting penalties on the weak and friendless, and by distracting the majority with deceitful professions. That with which our project commences, is invariably a promise to get a nation out of debt; but the invariable effect of it is, to plunge it irretrievably into debt." 149

This statement from Taylor, Lytle calls a "precise summation of the exploiting-capitalistic policy," which "was to need no new terms for a hundred years" and which "will serve today as the basic premises which inform this interest's action."¹⁵⁰

Apparently Lytle thinks he can ignore, here, Taylor's linking of farmer and mechanic as exploited classes.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ This imaginary confession of the aristocracy of paper and patronage appears on p. 66 of John Taylor's Inquiry. It is quoted on p. 421 of Lytle's "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933).

¹⁵⁰ Lytle, ibid. For another passage in which Lytle expresses admiration for Taylor's attack on the plutocracy, see the following: Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 84-85.

¹⁵¹ See p. 97 of Lytle's "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934). Here Lytle deploras Taylor's alignment of himself with the city "artisan and clerk."

Donald Davidson's writings contain the same passionate praise of Taylor as a prophet as do the writings of Lytle. Taylor showed the "ease with which, under an industrial system, a free state might be converted into a servile state," Davidson says. From Taylor's Arator, Davidson quotes a passage in which Taylor reviews the conspiracies against farmers and mechanics--first by priests, then by "'this legal faction of capitalists.'" What Taylor feared has come to pass, to a large extent, Davidson concludes, "although not without many setbacks to the course of industrial imperialism and many changes of party alignments and party catchwords." That Davidson (like Lytle) does not, however, really accept Taylor's interpretation of the meaning of history in class terms (that is, priest and, later, capitalist against mechanic and farmer) is suggested by Davidson's choice of the terms "industrialism" and "industrial imperialism" as labels for the villain.¹⁵² Furthermore, Davidson's tendency to describe the issues in American history in terms of conflict between regions or between agriculture and industry (rather than in the class terms employed by Taylor) is indicated by his quarrel with Charles Beard: criticizing Beard (whose interpretation of American history resembles Taylor's, though Davidson does not point that fact out), Davidson affirms that

In the entire history of the United States there have rarely been "national" issues which were national in the sense that they cut uniformly across sectional lines and divided voters strictly according to predilections of class or according to some general philosophy of politics or economics. ¹⁵³

¹⁵² Davidson, "Expedients vs. Principles," The Attack on Leviathan, pp. 332-333.

¹⁵³ "Two Interpretations of American History," ibid., p. 24.

Davidson's political economy is much closer to John C. Calhoun's political economy, with its emphasis on the protection of "interests" rather than "classes," than to John Taylor's.

Monarchy

In spite of the reservations which Lytle and Davidson have as to the class interpretation of history found in Taylor, it is probable that the most democratic-looking aspect of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' writings is the attack on the finance-capitalist plutocracy. In this attack on plutocracy, the Vanderbilt Traditionalists are seemingly at one with some twentieth-century liberal critics of monopolistic capitalism. But it should be noted that Tate and Lytle identify representative democracy with plutocracy--and monarchy (Jefferson's and Taylor's second major devil) with the fair balancing of various class interests in government policy.¹⁵⁴

For the archetype of Lytle's and Tate's sympathetic presentation of monarchy as a form of government, we can possibly look not only to Hilaire Belloc's vision of English history¹⁵⁵ but also to Christopher Hollis's book The American Heresy.¹⁵⁶ "If there is agreement between ruler and ruled on the moral law, equality in a large state is probably best guarded by an absolute monarch," Hollis maintains in the American edition of his book. Hollis's concession that "to a heterogeneous society the pi
aller of some sort of representative system is perhaps

¹⁵⁴ See pp. 69-71 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁵ See p. 92 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁶ See p. 105 of this dissertation.

necessary"¹⁵⁷ should not blind us to his linking of representative government with plutocracy. Representative institutions in practice mean the rule of the rich, Hollis maintains, and he adds sarcastically that Jefferson did not prophesy this--but that neither do many people today even, now that it's already happened.¹⁵⁸ A parenthetical remark in one of Tate's well-known essays shows that Hollis and Tate resemble each other in their views on monarchy and representative government. Describing "royalty" in England, prior to the sixteenth century, Tate says that "in theory at any rate, and often in practice," it "tried to balance class interests under the protection of the Crown."¹⁵⁹ Hollis makes a similar estimate of the French monarchy: "Traditionally the French monarchy was the friend of the people," Hollis declares; and he laments the monarchy's aligning itself with the aristocracy and the French people's overthrow of the king at the time of the French Revolution:

The monarchy played upon itself a tragic trick when it threw itself into the hands of the aristocracy. The people played upon itself a tragic trick when it destroyed the natural protector of equality. 160

Tate seems eager to place monarchy in a category separate from aristocracy--and equally eager to point out that democracy can

¹⁵⁷ Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 29.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 274. This is also the opinion of Hilaire Belloc, who comments extensively on the "gradual substitution [after the Reformation] of aristocratic rule for the old popular monarchy." Belloc, A History of England, IV, 37 et passim.

¹⁶⁰ Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 48.

give birth to a debased aristocratic form of government: "It should be borne in mind, against modern egalitarian and Marxian superstition," Tate insists,

that royalty and aristocracy are fundamentally opposed systems of rule; that plutocracy, the offspring of democracy, and that Marxism, the child of plutocracy, are essentially of the aristocratic political mode: they all mean class rule.¹⁶¹

Tate might have added that John Taylor and Jefferson are among those who have thought that royalty and aristocracy are of essentially the same mode.¹⁶²

Jefferson's and Taylor's dislike of monarchy is probably deplored by Lytle; at least, we might so conclude if we judge by Lytle's regretful remark on the original formation of the American republic: "A real monarchy might have been the best form of Union--consider the peace it brought to Austria-Hungary after 1848,"¹⁶³ Lytle muses. It should of course be pointed out that

¹⁶¹Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 274-275

¹⁶²The first chapter of Taylor's Inquiry assumes that the feudal aristocracy, the new aristocracy of paper and patronage, and the old divine right monarchies (supported by priestly classes) were all alike in that they exploited the majority. See Taylor, Inquiry, pp. 43-44, 46, 49-50, 477-478. Taylor's characterization of John Adams as a believer in the principle of monarchy (or a very strong executive) might almost be read as a picture of Allen Tate as sympathizer with the idea of royalty. Says Taylor: "From the tyranny of aristocracy, Mr. Adams takes refuge under the protections of a king, and considers him as so essentially the ally and protector of the people, as positively to declare, that, 'instead of the trite saying, "no bishop, no king," it would be a much more exact and important truth to say, no people, no king, and no king, no people; meaning, by the word king a first magistrate, possessed exclusively of executive power.'" Taylor, Inquiry, p. 46. A footnote on this page of the Inquiry states that Taylor quotes from p. 87 of John Adams' A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States (Philadelphia, 1787).

¹⁶³Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (October, 1934), 634. It has been suggested to me by a New York University professor that Austria's peace after 1848 was due as much to her neighbors (which were developing toward democracy) as to her own form of government.

Lytle thinks the "monarchy proposed by Hamilton was no real monarchy." But at the same time, it should be emphasized that Lytle (like Tate) tries to purify the idea of monarchy of the invidious connotations it has acquired. Hamilton's kind of king--and the kind of king Jefferson and Taylor feared--was "a king who would rule for special interests, one of those capitalists' kings relatively new to the world,"¹⁶⁴ Lytle says. The implication is that the genuine monarch has been in the past (and may again be) one who rules in the interest of all. (This is an assumption that requires documentation. Lytle does not provide the evidence that the pre-eighteenth century kings and Austria-Hungary's king after 1848 were benevolent.) Lytle also implies that the representative institutions devised by Jefferson and Taylor as a means of securing and checking government were and are inadequate, in theory and in practice. Jefferson and Taylor, says Lytle, offered no "medium by which the bad may be destroyed and the good set up and maintained." Taylor, when he perceives a political injustice, "can only appeal to the intelligence of the voter for the remedy,"¹⁶⁵ laments Lytle, who apparently wants measures stronger than the ballot.

In my opinion, the attraction of Lytle and Tate to monarchy is evidence that behind their contempt for Jefferson's and Taylor's faith in politics as salvation lies a thorough distrust of men who are undisciplined by a conservative religion (one

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 634-635.

¹⁶⁵ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 422.

assumes Lytle and Tate would support only a Christian monarchy) and by a fixed economic and social status. (Would a real monarch be trustworthy, I wonder, by virtue of the fact that he subscribed to a conservative faith and occupied an hereditary position in society?) Tate's approval of a society of fixed classes will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Calhoun in this dissertation. Lytle's approval of such a society can be further documented here: In the same article in which Lytle says a real monarchy would perhaps have been the best political form for the United States (the Austrian monarchy after 1848 is cited as an example of a real monarchy), he says that John Taylor failed to establish a good society because Taylor thought the Constitution, "a political contract[,]" could take the place of all those traditional institutions which make for an abundant and complete life." With a nostalgic glance backward to the Middle Ages, Lytle laments that Taylor did not "try to re-establish those different estates and permanent institutions which make for a spiritual unity."¹⁶⁶ What shall we make of Lytle's un-Jeffersonian sehnsucht for a stable society consisting of fixed "estates"? Does he wish for a literal revival of such classes as slave and planter or serf, yeoman, and lord? The answer is probably "no." But it is incontestable that he admires the spirit behind a society of fixed estates and that he would welcome a modern equivalent of feudalism or the plantocracy. That Lytle does admire the forms

¹⁶⁶ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 98-99.

of feudalism and the plantocracy and that he sees a parallelism between them is clearly indicated by the following quotation:

Although philosophy [i.e., the philosophy of the Enlightenment] proved a handicap to Jefferson, Taylor, and men of their class, the form of the plantocracy, given a tremendous impetus by the rise of cotton and the spread of negro slavery into the West, shaped Southern and Southwestern society into a feudalism, greatly different from European feudalism, but preserving the inertia and fixing the form so that the European tradition could be preserved. The planter ceased to be the small farmer's oppressor as in Colonial days. The conditions had changed. He had now an alien race to serve him. His interest was identical with that of the small farmer and the plain man generally, since they were all the objects of capitalistic exploitation. And the plain man . . . furnished vigorous recruits to the plantocracy. The vocabulary of the gentleman changed from that of liberalism to a speech more proper in his social rôle, the rôle of the First Estate. The planter stood in place of the feudal lord; the general movement in the place of the suzerain; and the Jeffersonian farmer in the place of the yeoman. These lines had become so generally fixed by 1830 as to be officially announced through the Pro-Slavery arguments of Dew, Harper, Hammond, and others. So, in spite of the fact that liberalism made the effort to found a State on capitalistic private property, a Southern nation began slowly to grow up in the changing Union. 167

VI. CONCLUSION

Jefferson is (in the opinion of Tate and Lytle) a heretic in the truth because he did not derive his insights (on the subject of liberty and equality) from a pre-Protestant Christian dogma and from conservative religious and social institutions. The truth to which Jefferson (as pictured by

167 Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 422-423.

these Vanderbilt Traditionalists) testified--that is, the truth that human beings are free when they are disciplined and made independent by their responsible control of a piece of productive property--became a heresy which contributed to the South's downfall; for Jefferson failed to bequeath to Southerners a religious conservatism which would have curbed, in time, their desire to enlarge and exploit their property for sheer cash. This is the opinion of Tate when he says that some of the great Southern ideas were killed by (among other things) "too much quick cotton";¹⁶⁸ and of Lytle when he says of the Lower South that it "forgot Jefferson's advice that only so much, not too much, land was necessary for a free life."¹⁶⁹ Instead of religious curbs and fixed social classes, Jefferson sanctioned a political mechanism--representative democracy--as a means of working toward man's destiny--the Heavenly City on earth.¹⁷⁰ But it must never

¹⁶⁸ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On The Limits of Poetry, p. 270.

¹⁶⁹ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 16. Lytle goes on to say of the Lower South in the 1830's: "Pioneering was becoming perverted from its purpose, as desire for better land became a habit. The means was fast becoming the end. The West had set itself to accumulate land, not that it might live freely, but that it might grow cotton and be wealthy The chief . . . peril [to which this society was exposed] was the difficulty of establishing a religion, for men with their minds on power are distracted from building their culture around the altar of God, and only such a culture can thrive." Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ When Tate states, in passing, that the "Heavenly City was still visible, to Americans, in the political economy of Thomas Jefferson," the implication is that Jefferson's vision was doomed to be discredited by events since it was a mere secular reflection of the older theologically grounded vision of Augustine and Dante. See p. 6 of Tate's "The Man of Letters in the Modern World" in The Forlorn Demon. Compare Carl Becker's ironic tone in discussing the secular faith of the philosophers of the eighteenth-century enlightenment: See Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932). See p. 58 of Tate's On the Limits of Poetry for praise of Becker's book.

be forgotten that in spite of their attacks on plutocracy (whether Northern or Old Southern), both Lytle and Tate have given a sympathetic picture of the paternalistic and feudal plantation when it settles down to perpetuate itself from generation to generation.¹⁷¹ In particular, Tate, like the Jefferson of the poem "On the Sage of Monticello," has not been "loath" to appear both as defender of the rights of the many¹⁷² and as admirer of the few.¹⁷³ It is, of course, permissible for Tate to be as inconsistent in his thought as Jefferson was in practice. But it would be a pity if Tate's readers were misled into believing that Tate has a Jeffersonian confidence in man and a Jeffersonian distrust of the paternalistic man whose prototype is the Old Southern slaveholder. That Tate cannot really understand how Jefferson's mind could be distressed by the fact of slavery is indicated by the ease with which Tate can identify the plantation economy with the ideal moral economy envisaged by Jefferson. "The ante-bellum man saw no difference between the Georgian house and the economic basis that supported it," Tate says--implying that the modern capitalist cannot claim a similar consistency between his "way of life" and his "way of making a living."¹⁷⁴ The complacent

¹⁷¹ See pp. 20-21, 167, 216ff of this dissertation.

¹⁷² See, for example, Tate's "Notes on Liberty and Property" in Who Owns America? and his review of Herbert Agar's The Pursuit of Happiness in Free America, II (October, 1938), 16-18.

¹⁷³ For evidence of Tate's admiration of the responsible aristocracy of the Lower South, see pp. 55-58 of Tate's Jefferson Davis

¹⁷⁴ Tate, "What Is A Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, p. 302.

assurance of some ante-bellum men that their Georgian homes were the expression of a moral economy is apparently equated by Tate with "the center of the philosophy of Jefferson"-- that is, the notion that the "whole economic basis of life is closely bound up with moral behavior, and [that] it is possible to behave morally all the time."¹⁷⁵ Tate seems to see no difference between the delusions of a complacent slaveowner and the aspirations of a slaveowner who deplored the slave system and wished to abolish it.

To the formulation of the Jeffersonian heresy, Robert Penn Warren adds an emphasis on Jefferson's failure to integrate into his political theory some version of the traditional dogma of original sin. Although it is always dangerous to ascribe to an author the sentiments which he places on the lips of one of his characters, I believe that Warren agrees with his character Meriwether Lewis that Jefferson in failing to warn America of the "tracklessness of the human heart" became America's "Great Betrayer."¹⁷⁶

Those Vanderbilt Traditionalists who have spoken most explicitly of Jefferson have, it seems, made a myth of the agrarian Jefferson; with the possible exception of Davidson and Owsley (when he is laying the "Foundations of Democracy")¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁷⁶ These phrases are from the speech of Meriwether Lewis on pp. 183-184 of Warren's Brother to Dragons.

¹⁷⁷ Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? p. 89 et passim.

they have made a "great heresiarch,"¹⁷⁸ if not a devil, of the liberal-political Jefferson. It remains to be seen whether other Old Southerners furnish Tate and some other Vanderbilt Traditionalists with a more easily exploitable image of their kind of good man living in the kind of society which, in their opinion, rendered the good life possible.

¹⁷⁸ Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 98.

CHAPTER IV
PROPHET AND MESSIAH:
JOHN C. CALHOUN
AND
OLD SOUTHERN CONSERVATISM

I am convinced 'twas Calhoun who divined
How the great western star's last race would run
Unbridled round our personal defect,
Grinding its ash with engines of its mind.

Allen Tate, "Fragment of a Meditation,"
Poems: 1922-1947, p. 85.

Mind and money, being both inorganic, want the State,
not as a matured form of high symbolism to be
venerated, but as an engine to serve a purpose.

Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West,
II, 404.

The North was, at that time, the most advanced modern
state, in which government, and men as political
entities, were instrumental to the superior ends of
commerce and trade. It was the ironic distinction
of the elder Rhett merely to have seen.

Allen Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 14

I. PROPHETS OF DOOM

In the writings of Allen Tate and Andrew Nelson Lytle, John C. Calhoun, with his "lieutenant"¹ Robert Barnwell Rhett, symbolizes the Lost Cause, pure and undefiled. The Cause, as Tate and Lytle see it, was essentially the revival of the European feudal tradition. On one occasion, Tate pictures the meaning of the ante-bellum conflict between North and South in the following terms:

in the South the most conservative of the European orders had, with great power, come back to life, while in the North, opposing the Southern feudalism, had grown to be [sic] a powerful industrial state which epitomized in spirit all those middle-class, urban impulses directed against the agrarian aristocracies of Europe after the Reformation. ²

Tate may be elaborating here a sentence from Oswald Spengler's

¹ Lytle uses this epithet--with qualifications. See Lytle, "John C. Calhoun" [review of Arthur Styron's The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy], Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 527.

² Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 301-302. See also Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 417.

The Decline of the West.³ In Volume II of the Decline, Spengler illustrates as follows his remark that in every "Late" period a "genuine second crop" of nobility arises:

In the Southern States of the American Union there grew up, from Baroque times onward, that planter-aristocracy which was annihilated by the money-powers of the North in the Civil War of 1861-5.⁴

At any rate, whether intentionally or not, Tate approximates Spengler's nostalgia for a society whose high forms are expressed in a priesthood and a nobility; for Tate says that the "issue" in the sectional struggle was "class rule and religion versus democracy and science."⁵ In the same passage, Tate implies that Calhoun was probably the last Southern statesman to understand the "historical meaning of the sectional struggle."⁶

³ Tate reviewed the first volume of Spengler's Decline when it was published in the United States. See Tate, "Fundamentalism" [review of Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality, Vol. I], Nation, CXXII (May 12, 1926), 532, 534. Tate's early acquaintance with Spengler is attested to by his mentioning Spengler in an article in the Fugitive. See A. [lien] T. [ate], "One Escape from the Dilemma," Fugitive, III (April, 1924), 36. By 1926, Tate had already, doubtless, read his friend Kenneth Burke's translation of a portion of Spengler's work. See Oswald Spengler, "Downfall of Western Civilization," tr. Kenneth Burke, Dial, LXXVII (November, 1924), 361-378; (December, 1924), 482-504; LXXVIII (January, 1925), 9-26. That Tate read the second volume of Spengler's Decline (either in the original German or in translation) is suggested by his summarizing several of its ideas in his review of Spengler's The Hour of Decision. See Tate, "Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism," American Review, III (April, 1934), 42-44.

⁴ Spengler, Decline, II, 356.

⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 87.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 86-87. Tate's words: "There is no evidence that [Jefferson] Davis--or any of the Southern statesmen after Calhoun--understood the historical meaning of the sectional struggle."

It may be significant that a Spenglerian biography of Calhoun furnishes the text for Lytle's essay on Calhoun.⁷ This biography, Arthur Styron's The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy,⁸ traces the decline of American democracy and makes of Calhoun a kind of prophet who cried in the wilderness that modern society was "running to some new and untried condition."⁹ Styron--whose book is according to Lytle a "brilliant piece of work," distinguished as a "philosophical commentary on political concepts and action during the first half of the nineteenth century"¹⁰--sees the defeat of Calhoun

⁷ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun" [review of Arthur Styron's The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy], Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 510-530.

⁸ Arthur Styron, The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy (New York, 1935). Styron does not acknowledge indebtedness to Spengler or anyone else in the Spenglerian passages I shall quote from his book. In fact, as my subsequent footnotes will show, Styron is not very nice about acknowledging his sources.

⁹ Ibid., p. 392. The phrase is taken, I presume, from Calhoun's letter to James H. Hammond, February 18, 1837, in "Correspondence of John C. Calhoun," American Historical Association Report for 1899, II, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (Washington, 1900), p. 367: "Modern society seems to me to be rushing to some new and untried condition." (This volume will hereafter be referred to as Correspondence.) For further comment on this letter, see footnote on p. 200 of this dissertation.

¹⁰ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 512. Lytle says of Styron's biography: "For the first time Calhoun is presented with some critical justice." Ibid., p. 511. The Southern Review for Autumn, 1935 (I, xi) announced that Andrew Lytle was "engaged in preparing a study of the philosophical and social backgrounds" of the struggle between North and South--a study which would "appear as a biography of Calhoun." The study never appeared. Did Lytle decide (we may wonder) that his biography of Calhoun need not be published since its point of view would have closely resembled the point of view in Styron's John C. Calhoun?

and the "ruin of the South" as having "elevate[d] to the ruling power" the capitalistic and Puritanical middle class. This class, says Styron in terms which parallel Spengler's and which closely parallel Tate's summary of Spengler's views,¹¹ would be in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a

class limited to the aimless accumulation through money of the cultural achievements of men of noble action and priestly thought, yet tending to destroy parasitically what it accumulated, perverting religion by turning it into "art," subverting nobility by debasing style into conventions and inner form into superficial taste, substituting money-economics for the feudal concrete sense of

¹¹ Here are the sentences in which Tate summarizes Spengler's view of the middle class and the civilization which is the result of its dominance: "its cultural life is parasitic, limited to aimless accumulation, through money, of the cultural achievements of the two prime estates [nobility and priesthood] whose destruction is its chief purpose. The Middle Class, rising to power at the Reformation, has gradually destroyed religion by turning it into art; it has destroyed nobility by debasing style into manners, inner form into superficial taste, an inevitable result of the substitution of money-economics for the feudal concrete sense of destiny resting upon the peasant soil At the height . . . comes Civilization . . . [,] the replacement of the concrete life of the soil by abstract intellect which in the realm of the spirit moves towards science and, in economics, towards finance-capitalism.

"The Middle Class achieves its purpose by building great cities, in which the rootless intellect thrives."

After presenting this summary (presumably at least partly in his own words), Tate proceeds to quote from Spengler's Decline, II, 97-98. That Tate uses quotation marks when he is repeating Spengler's exact words suggests that in the passage which I have just given (and which Tate did not enclose in quotation marks) Tate was paraphrasing Spengler. See Tate, "Spengler's Tract against Liberalism," American Review, III (April, 1934), 43-44. Compare Tate's summary of Spengler's views with Styron's picture of the middle class. The question which presents itself: Had Styron read Tate's summary? If he had, it may be that Lytle praised Styron for a book in which Styron echoed Tate's summary of Spengler on the middle class! One thing is certain: Styron picked up his picture of the middle class and the peasantry from Spengler, from Tate, or from some other interpreter of Spengler. And Styron does not acknowledge indebtedness to anybody for this picture.

destiny resting on the peasant-soil, building great cities in which the restless intellect thrived.¹²

Styron goes on to describe the kind of civilization which would follow the South's demise:

At its cold peak such a civilization would harden into an abstract intellect to replace the concrete the [sic] life of the soil, a civilization which moved in the realm of spirit towards science, and in the realm of economics towards finance-capitalism; producing a new system of investment and speculation which, depriving men of the sense of responsibility that land-ownership gives them, would permit a class-rule of money, and relieving men of the responsibility for creating their fortunes alone, would permit ruthless exploitation of the masses who would stoically submit or collectively resist in the hope that they too might wield the power to exploit others.¹³

¹² Styron, The Cast-Iron Man, p. 387. See p. 34 of The Cast-Iron Man for Styron's Spenglerian picture of a very early nineteenth-century South Atlantic society--its peasantry and its "differentiations" into "a nobility of men of action" and a "priesthood of men of thought." Styron has obviously lifted this society out of Spengler's medieval period and deposited it in Calhoun's South. See Spengler, Decline, II, 92, 96-98, 102-103, 336, 347.

It is amusing to note that Styron, in his "brilliant piece of work," profits by lifting some reflections on Calhoun and middle-class "aims" out of Vernon Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought. On p. 390 of The Cast-Iron Man, Styron writes (without using quotation marks or a footnote): "Calhoun erected the last barrier against the progress of middle-class aims--consolidation in politics and standardization in society, and a universal cash-register evaluation of life: the barrier was blown to pieces by the guns of the Civil War." On p. 81 of Vol. II of Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1927), Parrington writes: "He [Calhoun] erected the last barrier against the progress of middle-class aims--a universal cash-register evaluation of life: and the barrier was blown to pieces by the guns of the Civil War." Styron does list Parrington in his bibliography.

¹³ Styron, The Cast-Iron Man, p. 387. Compare Styron's description of the middle class with Tate's summary of Spengler's ideas. See footnote 11 on the preceding page of this dissertation. Styron's familiarity with Spengler's thought is confirmed by his reference to Spengler's The Hour of Decision in an article in the American Review. Highly amusing is the fact that in this article, published before his biography of Calhoun, Styron tries to parry any suspicion that he might be a Spenglerian. See Arthur Styron, "Shall We Have an Aristocracy?" American Review, IV (November, 1934), 1-3.

Styron's analysis of the middle class aims against which Calhoun fought and which he allegedly predicted would destroy American society clearly owes more to Spengler than it does to Calhoun. Neither Tate nor Lytle has undertaken such wholesale importation of Spenglerian terminology into his works as Styron has. Yet we may feel that there is more of Spengler than of Calhoun in the following image of the Old Southerner: "I am convinced," says Tate in a poem presaging dislocations in American life in the 1930's,

'twas Calhoun who divined
How the great Western star's last race would run
Unbridled round our personal defect,
Grinding its ash with engines of its mind.¹⁴

¹⁴ Tate, "Fragment of A Meditation," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 85. Edgar Allan Poe would have been a better choice if Tate needed an Old Southern Spengler. Poe's "The Colloquy of Monos and Una," which Tate quotes in a recent essay, contains material more closely corresponding to Tate's image for our society in disintegration than does any material I have found in Calhoun's writings. See Tate, "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God," Forlorn Demon, pp. 64-65. In the passage which Tate quotes from Poe's "Colloquy," Monos recalls to Una (in the afterlife) how in the decline of their civilization the Arts (technology) developed excessively, abstractions (such as the idea of "universal equality") "gained ground," "smoking cities arose," and the "taste"--that "faculty . . . between the pure intellect and the moral sense"--was totally replaced by "the harsh mathematical reason of the schools." See Poe, Complete Poems and Stories, ed. Quinn, I, 360. Tate has from time to time deplored our exclusively scientific mentality; our lack of anything but a "common mind"; and our lack of a "personal consciousness" enabling us to savor the "qualitative values of life." Tate, "Mistaken Beauty," New Republic, LIX (May 29, 1929), 51. For an example of Poe's use of the image of a comet's path as sign of the world's end and as a symbol of the "eccentric . . . orbit of the human mind," see Edgar Allan Poe [Review of Slavery in the United States, by J. K. Paulding], The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison (New York, 1902), VIII, 266-268.

See Calhoun to Mrs. T. G. Clemson, November 21, 1846, Correspondence, pp. 711-712, for reflections which tend to support Tate's image of Calhoun as prophet of doom. In this passage Calhoun is expressing to his daughter his ambivalent feelings about the "great progress made in the last hundred years in subjecting matter to the control of mind."

A brief excursion into Tate's and Lytle's Spenglerian dabblings confirms, at least, our suspicion that one reason for these two gentlemen's admiration of Calhoun is simply the fact that the Calhounian temperament appeals to them. Addicted to reading or pronouncing jeremiads, Tate and Lytle are probably attracted by Calhoun's penchant for making gloomy prophecies. Tate seems to take grim pleasure in the notion that Calhoun and Rhett (along with Edmund Ruffin and George Fitzhugh of Virginia) issued a "realistic warning to the 'American system' that is still valid today."¹⁵ Lytle pictures Calhoun as two people: one is "the commentator, taking part in debate and strategy"; the other (whom Lytle seems to think more profound) is "aloof, withdrawn by his wisdom from acrimonious dispute, the melancholy prophet foretelling the ruin of a civilization."¹⁶

In the hierarchy of prophets, according to both Tate and Lytle, Robert Barnwell Rhett ranks above even Calhoun. Tate

¹⁵ Tate, "The Prophet of Secession," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 26. Tate does not mention Fitzhugh's pointing out of similarities between socialism and the Old Southern slave labor system. See Wish, George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South, p. 107. The Vanderbilt Traditionalists, who--in the words of Frank Lawrence Owsley--represent themselves as wanting to see "property restored and the proletariat thus abolished and Communism made impossible," have not seen fit to emphasize Fitzhugh's comment on how slavery, by capturing the virtues of socialism, might help laissez faire society avert a trend toward socialism. For Owsley's comment on the Agrarians' plan for preventing Communism see Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," American Review, IV (March, 1935), 532.

¹⁶ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 525-526.

puts the matter strongly: Calhoun, though he perceived the South was increasingly under attack,

was committed to preserving the rights, even the supremacy, of the South within the Federal Union up to the last moment; while the elder Rhett, that profound and cynical statesman, was the Southern Tiresias who saw that all compromise with the North was futile, that the South must come to secession or in the end to gradual domination by the North. 17

Lytle develops at some length this view of the relative merits of Calhoun and Rhett as prophets. Calhoun's "strong emotional attachment to the Union blinded him to the possibility that the South . . . could not control its dealing within it,"¹⁸ Lytle records, with lamentations. Rhett "was spared Calhoun's emotion," says Lytle, for Rhett was "concerned with the continuation of Southern society under planter rule and not for a political combination [the Constitutional Union] per se."¹⁹ Lytle thinks that Calhoun was preoccupied too long with preserving that political combination and was consequently tardy in recognizing the impossibility of Southern existence within the Union. Whereas Rhett, the "Radical" or "Separate-state-actionist," demanded immediate and decisive action by the individual state (South Carolina) to precipitate secession, Calhoun tried first to "control the Democratic party and through it preserve the Union and the South's place in it" and then "[w]hen he failed in this, he attempted to get the Southern states to co-operate

¹⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 10. Another of Tate's titles for Rhett is the "John the Baptist of the [secession] movement." Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁸ Lytle, "Principles of Secession" [review of Laura A. White's Robert Barnwell Rhett, Father of Secession and Avery Craven's Edmund Ruffin, Southerner] Hound and Horn, V (July-September, 1932), 690.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 689.

in some common action."²⁰ Although Rhett was for a number of years "Calhoun's chief lieutenant," he "understood, what seemed obscure to Calhoun, that there had never been any true compromise" and that after 1820 the South had "steadily lost ground."²¹ Lytle seems to believe that Rhett, lacking any allegiance to the old Union, could devote himself without qualification to picturing a black future for the South if she did not divorce herself from the North.

Tate and Lytle²² seem to agree that if the South had followed Rhett in his conviction that secession should have been earlier resorted to, Southern civilization might have been saved. In one lyrical tribute to Rhett's powers of prognostication, Tate calls Rhett "the most completely vindicated man" in American history. Tate draws a striking portrait of this "prophet of secession, who, from the dingy office of the Charleston Mercury, had thundered against half-measures in the South for more than twenty years"; and Tate notes with emphasis that Rhett's diagnosis and proposed remedy (which was not accepted in time) were sound:

the South was destroyed, and the American nation became what he said it would become. He saw the weakness of the Southern faith in mere political action--its futility against the extra-legal procedure of the North, whose most clamorous and radical leaders were driven by irrational fixed

²⁰ Ibid.; and Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 526-527.

²¹ Lytle, "Principles of Secession," Hound and Horn, V (July-September, 1932), 689.

²² Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 527.

ideas that recognized no Constitutional authority whatever. The slow, temporising Southern intelligence could not cope with such a force, for which the body politic was no longer a reality. The North was, at that time, the most advanced modern state, in which government, and men as political entities, were instrumental to the superior ends of commerce and trade. It was the ironic distinction of the elder Rhett merely to have seen.²³

Fervent as their admiration of Rhett the prophet is, Tate and Lytle are looking not merely for a prophet (a "Tiresias")²⁴ but for a savior--someone to play the role of rejected "Christ"²⁵ or "Messiah."²⁶ And Tate appears to suspect that Rhett may lack the moral stature and the sympathetic concern for his fellow-beings which would qualify him to take his place in Southern mythology as the man who could have saved us from our national degradation. In Rhett's "character," Tate concedes, "[t]here was a certain coldness, a malign and contemptuous quality . . . , mysterious and inscrutable, that repelled men of less depth and of weaker purpose."²⁷ Possibly because Rhett possessed these unattractive personal traits, because his

²³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 14. Cf. the quotation from Spengler's Decline on p. 172 of this dissertation.

²⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 10. Professor Oscar Cargill has pointed out to me the humor of the fact that Tate's idol, Dante, places his Tiresias in hell with the false prophets. See Canto XX of Dante Alighieri, "Inferno," Divine Comedy. Recent evidence that Tate is a Dantophile is the following: Tate, "The Symbolic Imagination: The Mirrors of Dante," Forlorn Demon, pp. 32-55.

²⁵ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 38.

²⁶ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (October, 1934), 638.

²⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 24.

political position was less eminent than Calhoun's, because his political pronouncements were less philosophic in tone, or because he had the misfortune to remain alive (very untragically) during the debacle of the Civil War, Rhett gives place (in Tate's and Lytle's writings) to Calhoun for the dual role of prophet and Dying God who fails to save his people from their fate.

II. PLAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CHAPTER

In assessing the significance of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' Calhoun image (or images), we are concerned not only with the doom which their Jeremiah predicts but also with the social and political gospel which, in his role of savior, he recommends. The image of Calhoun which we find in Tate's, Lytle's, Davidson's, and Owsley's writings may be represented in three aspects: the Calhoun who pronounces on human nature, the Calhoun who outlines the class structure of a good society, and the Calhoun who imagines the political measures and the political "organism" suited to human nature and a proper society for his own time and country. Two kinds of questions will be raised about these Vanderbilt Traditionalists' Calhoun image. First: Do the Vanderbilt Traditionalists give a well-documented picture of Calhoun? Or do they ask the reader to take a generalized portrait on faith? Does their portrait stand up under comparison with Calhoun's writings? And secondly: What do these Vanderbilt Traditionalists admire or defend in the historic Calhoun or in their own

image of Calhoun? In answering this final question, we shall examine not only their references to Calhoun but their interest in ideas which happen to be those of Calhoun or other Old Southerners (such as Rhett, Edmund Ruffin, George Fitzhugh, William Harper, Thomas Dew, and James H. Hammond) who made an ultra-conservative defense of ante-bellum Southern civilization.

III. CALHOUN ON HUMAN NATURE

Tate has remarked that the "political writers of South Carolina"--James H. Hammond, William Harper, and Calhoun--were "classical and realistic."²⁸ It is probable that Tate intends these adjectives to be terms of praise. Although he does not discuss the sense in which these gentlemen are "classical and realistic," Tate may have in mind, among other things, the famous passage in which Calhoun explicitly sets forth his view of human nature--that is, the first few pages of A Disquisition on Government.²⁹ In these pages Calhoun isolates "that constitution or law of our nature, without which government would not exist, and with which its existence is necessary."³⁰ The gist of this paradoxical "law of our nature," says Calhoun,

²⁸ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On The Limits of Poetry, p. 274.

²⁹ John C. Calhoun, "A Disquisition on Government," The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé (New York, 1854-1855), I, 1-3.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

is that

while man is created for the social state, and is accordingly so formed as to feel what affects others, as well as what affects himself, he is, at the same time, so constituted as to feel more intensely what affects him directly, than what affects him indirectly through others; or, to express it differently, he is so constituted, that his direct or individual affections are stronger than his sympathetic or social feelings.³¹

Tate may find even more congenial Calhoun's earlier formulation of the second half of this paradox and its corollary. In this earlier work, the "South Carolina Exposition" of 1828, Calhoun uses a more moralistic terminology--one which emphasizes the selfishness of human nature. Speaking of the fathers of the Constitution, Calhoun remarks on their perception "that the selfish predominate over the social feelings" and that government of "adequate powers" was therefore necessary. At the same time, Calhoun says, the founding fathers also saw that "checks" on the government were necessary since

this very predominance of the selfish over the social feelings, which rendered government necessary, would, of necessity, lead to corruption and oppression on the part of those vested with its exercise. Thus the necessity of government and of checks originates in the same great principle of our nature; and thus the very selfishness which impels those who have power to desire more, will also, with equal force, impel those on whom power operates to resist aggression; and on the balance of these opposing tendencies, liberty and happiness must for ever depend.³²

³¹ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

³² Calhoun, Works, VI, 53-54.

IV. CALHOUN AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The "Older Religious Community"

In addition to complimenting Calhoun for being "classical and realistic," Tate appears to describe Calhoun as a proponent of the society formed according to pre-Reformation religious principles. In a passage which maintains that "only in the South [today] does one find a convinced supernaturalism," that "it [the South or its supernaturalism] is nearer to Aquinas than to Calvin, Wesley, or Knox," and that the "conflict between modernism and fundamentalism" is doubtless "chiefly the impact of the new middle-class civilization upon the rural society,"³³ Tate warns that we should not

³³ That Tate sensed some peculiar kinship between Spengler's thought and the conservative instincts of the South is suggested by his using the title "Fundamentalism" for his review of Volume I of Spengler's Decline--a review published while the Scopes anti-evolution trial was being nationally discussed. In his review, Tate singled out for comment (among other things) Spengler's disparagement of mathematical or mechanical approaches to the study of history. See Tate, "Fundamentalism," Nation, CXXII (May 12, 1926), 532, 534. In his later review of Spengler's The Hour of Decision, Tate comments on Spengler's interest in the "peasant," identified with the medieval phase of Western culture. See Tate, "Spengler's Tract against Liberalism," American Review, III (April, 1934), 42.

John Lincoln Stewart says that the "trial of John Scopes, which began in July of 1925 at Dayton, . . . caught the Fugitives, who had never regarded themselves as especially Southern, squarely between the millstones of the Old and New South." Stewart mentions an "angry quarrel" between Ransom, who was teaching at Vanderbilt, and Edwin Mims, then chairman of the Vanderbilt English department. Ransom "found himself defending the Fundamentalists for their beliefs," says Stewart, while Mims wanted to "send letters and telegrams to prominent Northerners and to northern journals insisting upon the progressivism of the South." See Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," p. 211. Tate himself dates the time at which he and his old Vanderbilt friends became "consciously historical and sectional" as "not in fact until about 1927." Recalling the occasion, Tate says: "one day--I cannot be sure of the year, I think 1926--I wrote John Ransom a new sort of letter. I told him that we must do something about Southern history and the culture of the South." Tate, "The Fugitive--1922-1925: A Personal Recollection Twenty Years After," Princeton University Library Chronicle, III (April, 1942), 83.

"allow ourselves to forget that philosophers of the State, from Sir Thomas More to John C. Calhoun, were political defenders of the older religious community."³⁴ This allusion to Calhoun and the older religious community Tate does not see fit to fill in with detail, just as Lytle does not bother to explain the phrase "complete society" when he says that Hammond, Harper, Daw, Fitzhugh, Rhett, and Calhoun "denied the early liberalism [of Jefferson] and attempted to bring about a union of all conservative elements towards the establishment of a complete society."³⁵ Lytle's other writings, as we have already seen, indicate unequivocally that he thinks of the good society (and presumably the "complete" society) as one which consists of separate estates and an "all enveloping institution, some Church," to "guide and contain and suffuse the various divisions of society"³⁶ (and, we may suppose, to define the liberties and obligations of each division). Since Tate does not give us a precise definition of the "older religious community," we are forced to guess what he means. The context of his remark may supply a clue to his definition. In this context, he seems to be contrasting, in somewhat Spenglerian terms, the social and economic spirit of medieval Catholic and feudal culture with

³⁴ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 289. The sentence about More and Calhoun does not appear in the earliest version of this essay. See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (April, 1935), 166. In another essay, Tate says the "religious community" is known today as "regionalism." See Tate, "The Situation in American Writing: Seven Questions," Partisan Review, VI (Summer, 1939), 29. This latter remark does not, however, throw any light on the sense in which Calhoun was a political defender of the older religious community; nor does it define the sense in which regionalism is automatically a religious conception.

³⁵ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 97-98.

³⁶ Lytle, "How Many Miles to Babylon," Hopkins Review, VI (Spring-Summer, 1953), 103.

the spirit of Protestantism and middle-class capitalism. Having argued that the Old South's lack of a free white peasant substratum³⁷ and her lack of a supra-secular authority³⁸ were major defects preventing her culture from achieving the form toward which her best instincts tended, Tate may be suggesting here that Calhoun and the best Old Southerners favored instinctively, in their anti-individualism, the medieval notion of an objective religious authority informing an organic society rooted in love of the land. It even looks as if Tate's own anti-individualism may here parallel that of George Fitzhugh, who (according to August O. Spain) "believed he had found the origin of anarchical natural-rights political doctrine in the Reformation which gave birth to the idea of private judgment."³⁹ Tate may well agree with Fitzhugh's idea that "[t]ransferred from religious to political application, 'the right of private judgment . . . leads to the right to act on that judgment, to the supreme sovereignty of the individual, and the abnegation of all government.'"⁴⁰

³⁷ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 272-273. Tate cites the "English yeomanry before the fourteenth century" as an example of the kind of free peasantry in which "great cultures" may be "rooted." Ibid., p. 273.

³⁸ See Tate's "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486; and his "Remarks on the Southern Religion" in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 166-175.

³⁹ August O. Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun (New York, 1951), p. 98n.

⁴⁰ George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters (Richmond, 1857), pp. 80-81 as paraphrased and quoted in Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 98-99n.

As a matter of fact, Fitzhugh would be in certain respects a better object for Tate's and Lytle's neo-feudal adulation than Calhoun is. According to Harvey Wish, Fitzhugh's medievalism included "an almost canonical interpretation of interest-making" and a suspicion of money-economics which led him to criticize a friend for "using his capital as an instrument to compel others to work for him."⁴¹ Tate insists that the Old South was the "last battleground of a conflict that began in Europe with the economic changes growing out of the Reformation, the conflict between producer and entrepreneur, between the land and manipulating capital."⁴² It would greatly clarify matters if Tate would unequivocally state his opinion of Fitzhugh's assumption that the slave-owner's investment of capital in a slave was somehow better than the capitalist's use of capital to hire a laborer. Furthermore, it would clarify matters if Tate would comment on the evidence, if any, that Fitzhugh was an adherent of the "older religious community"⁴³ when he maintained that in pre-Reformation feudal society "every man in England had his appropriate situation and duties, and a mutual and adequate interest in the soil."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Wish, George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South, p. 177.

⁴² Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 417.

⁴³ The phrase used by Tate to characterize the ultimate object of Calhoun's allegiance. Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South, On the Limits of Poetry, p. 269.

⁴⁴ George Fitzhugh as quoted in Wish, George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South, p. 186.

Tate speaks not of Fitzhugh, however, but of Calhoun as a "political defender . . . of the older religious community." And when we examine Calhoun's works for evidence that he looks back to feudal Catholic society as a pattern, the evidence is, at best, sketchy. Calhoun does invidiously characterize the seventeenth-century Puritan revolutionary era in England as a period of absolute popular government, leading to the growth of greedy and violent factions and culminating in military dictatorship.⁴⁵ He does, as we shall see, reject the natural-rights philosophy and especially its mythical state of nature in which all individuals were supposedly free and equal in their rights.⁴⁶ And he does, like Thomas More, accept the notion that man is created to live in society, rather than in isolation from men. Furthermore, he does, in the Disquisition on Government and the speech on the Oregon Bill,⁴⁷ give a pious justification for his assumption that society and government are the necessary conditions of man's existence: the "Infinite Being," he says, has "assigned" to man

the social and political state, as best adapted to develop the great capacities and faculties, intellectual and moral, with which he has endowed him; and has, accordingly, constituted him so as not only to impel him into the social state, but to make government necessary for his preservation and well-being. 48

⁴⁵ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 100.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 57-59; Calhoun, "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," Works, IV, 509-510. Calhoun does not link the individualistic natural-rights philosophy with Protestantism.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 510.

⁴⁸ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 6-7.

In general, however, Calhoun's defense of the organic conception of society and the state does not rest on any authoritarian or fervently held religious principle. Where is the evidence that Calhoun deeply desired the presence of some single religious authority to inform his society?⁴⁹ Can we believe that Calhoun would hold, with Sir Thomas More, the idea that "'God hath here ordained in earth the two great orders, I mean, of special and consecrate persons, the sacred princes and priests '"⁵⁰ Although Calhoun does say that anarchy is a great evil,⁵¹ there is little evidence that he would echo Thomas More's dictum "'You must obey the State because an ordered State is according to the mind of God.'"⁵² Is it not easier to see Calhoun, when he is playing political philosopher, as the secular protestant asserting the claims of one economic interest against another economic interest which has captured the machinery of the State

⁴⁹ Calhoun's dislike of forcible attempts to produce orthodoxy, whether Protestant or Catholic, in a society is indicated by his likening the abolitionists to the orthodox of former centuries who felt responsible for their neighbor's heresies and endeavored by violent means to imprint the orthodox views on their erring neighbor's minds. See Calhoun, Works, III, 152, 177-178. This does not, of course, prove that Calhoun would not have liked to live in a society whose population was homogeneous in religion.

⁵⁰ Thomas More as quoted by Christopher Hollis in Sir Thomas More (London, 1934), p. 174. Tate may have read Hollis's book on More before incorporating his remark on More and Calhoun into his essay on "The Profession of Letters in the South." See also Thomas More, The Apologie of Thomas More, Knyght, ed. Arthur I. Taft (London, 1930), p. 55.

⁵¹ Calhoun, "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," Works, IV, 510.

⁵² Thomas More as quoted by Christopher Hollis in Sir Thomas More, p. 174.

(i.e., the Federal Government)? Finally, is there reason to think that Calhoun would hold with More the Aristotelian notion that "A man [is] . . . either a beast or a God--hardly a man at all--unless he [is] . . . living in willing acceptance of a certain place in an ordered society--a place of authority or of subordination, or of subordination in relation to such a man and authority in relation to such another"?⁵³ In his Disquisition on Government, Calhoun does not argue that individual man of the upper and middle groups should accept his destiny as limited by the social and economic position into which God has caused him to be born. When he is arguing for the perpetuation of slavery, Calhoun does of course assume that slaves should obey their masters and not aspire to rise, but when he sets forth his full views on the relation of liberty to inequality and progress, Calhoun adopts a line of reasoning which is hardly consistent with a society whose middle and upper groups are divided into fixed classes. As we shall see, Calhoun's Disquisition celebrates the good old American desire of individuals to "better their condition."⁵⁴

A Society of Fixed Classes?

This brings us to a statement of a dilemma in which Tate and Lytle find themselves when they try to project an image of

⁵³ Thomas More as paraphrased in ibid.

⁵⁴ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 56.

Calhoun. The social ideas which they profess to see in Calhoun--the notion of a stable agricultural society of relatively fixed classes--are for the most part imbedded in Calhoun's pro-slavery argument. The contrast between Calhoun's attack (in the interest of slavery) on the egalitarianism of the enlightenment and Calhoun's approval of "get-aheadism" among the middle and upper groups of society escapes them--or is glossed over by them. Tate, in particular, generalizes--sometimes a little surreptitiously--on the pro-slavery argument's case for the benefits of fixed relationships in society. And both Tate and Lytle fail to acknowledge straightforwardly the closeness of Calhoun's thought to a laissez faire rationale of economic life, so far as the more fortunate members of society are concerned. The anti-materialism of Tate and Lytle (and such a disciple of theirs as Richard M. Weaver) ought to prevent them from admiring one who, like Calhoun, took a disapproving view of the aspiring laborer or slave and quite another view of the gentlemen or not-quite-gentlemen who wanted to improve his material position.

Of Calhoun and Calhoun's social philosophy, Andrew N. Lytle has this (among other things) to say: "Vilified as the defender of slavery, his concept of liberty was sounder than Jefferson's."⁵⁵ Having thus exorcised Calhoun's critics, who (Lytle implies) can't see anything but a slavocrat in Calhoun, Lytle sets out to paraphrase Calhoun's argument in favor of limiting the liberty of some men more rigorously than that of

⁵⁵ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 511.

others. The villain, for Calhoun and apparently for Lytle, is the Jeffersonian natural-rights philosophy, which ignores distinctions that (they think) had better be recognized among men. Calhoun's repudiation of the Jeffersonian doctrine that men are created with certain inalienable rights is discussed in some detail by Lytle. Lytle paraphrases those passages (from Calhoun's Disquisition and from his speech on the Oregon bill) in which Calhoun traces to the Declaration of Independence the fallacious idea that men are born free and equal.⁵⁶ Lytle seems to think Calhoun's debunking of this idea is quite witty. At any rate, he thinks Calhoun's analogy between the parent-child relationship and the relationship of free to less free members of society is worth repeating as social wisdom: Calhoun announced, says Lytle, "that men were not only born free; men were not born. Children were born and, far from being free, they were born in a state of complete

⁵⁶ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 52-59; "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," ibid., IV, 507-512.

dependence."⁵⁷ Does Lytle think that Calhoun's analogy establishes the rightness and desirability of having certain members of society (the laboring or slave classes) unconditionally barred from the freedoms and privileges enjoyed by those in the middle and upper classes? (Richard M. Weaver seems to hold some such view when he uses an implied analogy between the "hierarchical" organization of the family and the hierarchy which he thinks should characterize the good

⁵⁷ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 515. This is a close paraphrase of Calhoun's statements in Works, IV, 507-508. Contrast the social implications of Calhoun's statement with those of Jefferson's statement emphasizing the ultimate freedom of the child. "We acknowledge," says Jefferson, "that our children are born free; that that freedom is the gift of nature, and not of him who begot them; that they [are] under our care during infancy, and therefore of necessity under a duly tempered authority, that care is confided to us to be exercised for the preservation and good of the child only As he was never the property of his father so, when adult, he is sui juris, entitled himself to the use of his own limbs, and the fruits of his own exertions." Jefferson to _____ (?), 1813, New York Public Library, MS, IV, 193 as quoted in Padover, Thomas Jefferson on Democracy, p. 13.

Calhoun was capable of fusing the idea of parental authority with the idea that the master had a right to the fruit of the slave's exertion. Margaret L. Coit quotes from Sarah M. Maury, The Statesmen of America (Philadelphia, 1847), p. 378, the following description by Calhoun of the slave-owner's parental authority over the slave: "'Give the Planters Free Trade, and let every Planter be the parent as well as the master of his Slaves; that is, let the Slaves be made to do their duty as well as to eat, drink, and sleep; let morality and industry be taught them, and the Planter will have reason to be satisfied; he will always obtain seven or eight per cent upon the value of his Slaves; and need never be compelled to the distressing alternative of parting with them unless he allows them by overindulgence to waste his substance.'" Quoted in Margaret L. Coit, John C. Calhoun: American Portrait (Boston, 1950), p. 286.

society.)⁵⁸ Had Lytle seen fit to quote Calhoun's remark that children "grow to all the freedom of which the condition in which they were born permits, by growing to be men,"⁵⁹ the full implications of Calhoun's "concept of liberty" would have been clearer. To be specific, we may note that this "concept of liberty" was intended to justify slavery. Does Lytle think that this "concept of liberty" which supports slavery is "sounder" than Jefferson's idea of liberty because it may more easily than Jefferson's idea be made to support a society of separate estates? Lytle's praise, elsewhere in his writings, for a society made up of "different estates"⁶⁰ makes us suspect that the answer to this question is "yes."

When we look at Lytle's paraphrase of Calhoun's attack on that part of the Jeffersonian tradition which implies that great externally imposed inequalities among men are to be deplored, we find Lytle hard pressed. Lytle, whose own ideology favors a hierarchical social order, can of course

⁵⁸ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 41, 42. An amusing variant of the analogy between the parent-child relationship and the slave-master relationship occurs in Styron's The Cast-Iron Man, p. 374: "the status of Southern slaves was really that of minor children--they had only the rights of minors, but so far as the family was concerned they belonged. Nor could the brutality of an individual planter be cited against the institution any more than the brutality of an inhuman parent be [sic] cited against parenthood."

⁵⁹ Calhoun, "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," Works, IV, 508. Italics mine. This remark, omitted by Lytle, is surely an indispensable part of the context of the statement which Lytle does paraphrase.

⁶⁰ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 99.

agree with Calhoun's statement that "it was a vicious error to assume that liberty cannot be perfect without perfect equality."⁶¹ But when Lytle cites Calhoun's dictum that "[t]o make equality of condition essential to liberty would destroy both liberty and progress,"⁶² he grows a little uncomfortable. Perhaps he fears we may think Calhoun talks like the finance-capitalist devil whom Agrarians have repeatedly abjured. Is Calhoun (we innocent readers may wonder) really the advocate of inequality in the interest of stimulating that competitive striving which advertisements have taught us to believe is behind all economic development? Lytle adds, as if to stifle our question: "When Calhoun says progress, he does not mean the increase of physical goods as the end of society."⁶³ But Lytle's statement merely pushes aside the principal question. For the principal question is whether Calhoun advocates, for all but the slave or menial classes, a liberty to pursue wealth as the means of advancement. The question is, in other words, whether Calhoun's ideal for these middle and upper classes is distinguishable from the plutocratic perversion of the democratic ideal--a perversion for which the Vanderbilt Traditionalists have expressed abhorrence.

⁶¹ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 515. This is a close paraphrase of a statement on p. 56 of Calhoun's "Disquisition" in Works, I.

⁶² Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 515. A close paraphrase of Calhoun's statement in Works, I, 56. Davidson, like Lytle, cites this passage from Calhoun's Disquisition. See Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 268.

⁶³ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 515.

Calhoun's answer to this question appears unequivocally in sentences discreetly not quoted by Lytle. Calhoun's thesis is that the individual's desire for material advancement is at the root of most human development. Not the desire of individuals to fit the niche into which they have been born, but the "desire of individuals to better their condition" is the "main spring" for all man's development of his intellectual and moral faculties,⁶⁴ Calhoun clearly says. That individual "get-aheadism" is the central impulse behind civilization's progress and that social and political organization should accept this fact is clearly Calhoun's contention in the Disquisition--despite his disavowal, upon occasion, of any personal interest in riches⁶⁵ and despite his disparagement of mere greed for wealth and power.⁶⁶ After the duty of government to "protect" society--that is, "to guard the community against injustice, violence, and anarchy within, and against attacks from without," says Calhoun, comes the government's duty to "perfect" society--that is, to provide that happy balance of "liberty and security" which will permit individuals to "better their condition."⁶⁷ Calhoun, the philosopher who on various occasions defends slavery as a just arrangement by emphasizing that in every wealthy and civilized country the

⁶⁴ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 52. This looks like a thoroughly materialistic explanation of most important human effort.

⁶⁵ Calhoun to Duff Green, July 27, 1837, Correspondence, pp. 374-375.

⁶⁶ Calhoun to Mrs. T. G. Clemson, June 10, 1847, ibid., p. 731.

⁶⁷ Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 52.

upper class has lived off the labor of the lower class,⁶⁸ is apparently sanctioning the ambitious in the middle and upper classes when he writes this part of his Disquisition:

Liberty leaves each free to pursue the course he may deem best to promote his interest and happiness, as far as it may be compatible with the primary end for which government is ordained [i.e., the protection of the community];--while security gives assurance to each, that he shall not be deprived of the fruits of his exertions to better his condition [L]iberty repays power with interest, by increased population, wealth, and other advantages, which progress and improvement bestow on the community. 69

Lytle does well to leave unmentioned these remarks of Calhoun which glorify the enterprising man. It would be difficult for Lytle to find much love for social "stability" in Calhoun's celebration of the benefits bestowed on society by the individual who works to improve his economic status. Security for property, that familiar Lockean aim, seems to Calhoun the key to the improvement of society. Yet the slave laboring class is automatically forbidden the opportunity to acquire property; and Calhoun assumes, of course, that in no "old and civilized" country has labor been allowed to keep much of the

⁶⁸ See, for instance, the following: Calhoun, "Speech on the . . . Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, February 6, 1837," Works, II, 631; "Report on . . . Abolition Petitions . . .", Ibid., V, 207-208.

⁶⁹ Ibid., I, 52-53.

wealth it creates.⁷⁰ Calhoun's vision of society is thus a compound vision. All the "stability" is at the bottom; the middle and upper levels of society teem with ambitious individuals. Calhoun must be thinking of the middle and upper groups when he rejoices in that "inequality of condition between the front and rear ranks, in the march of progress, which gives so strong an impulse to the former to maintain their position, and to the latter to press forward into their files."⁷¹ In Calhoun's opinion, apparently, envy and emulation are socially beneficial attitudes, provided their incidence is limited to the middle and upper groups. (Naturally--Calhoun would doubtless say--a slave ought not to envy his master.) Calhoun's praise of the competitive impulse contrasts with

⁷⁰ Calhoun, "Report on Abolition Petitions . . .," ibid., V, 208. It may be argued that Calhoun considered it dangerous to society when the lower free laboring classes were allowed to retain too large a proportion of the fruits of their labor. See his often-quoted letter to James H. Hammond, February 18, 1837, Correspondence, p. 367: "I had no conception that the lower class had made such great progress to equality and independence. Such change of condition and mode of thinking on their part indicates great approaching change in the political and social condition of the country, the termination of which is difficult to be seen. Modern society seems to me to be rushing to some new and untried condition."

Calhoun's apparently instinctive assumption that manual labor is the only true creator of wealth produces absurdities in his thought--absurdities which none of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists face. At one moment, Calhoun defends slavery on the grounds that labor has always been deprived of much of the wealth it creates; at another, defending the non-laboring Southern slaveowner (as well as other Southerners, of course) against the tariff, he declares: "He who earns the money, who digs it from the earth with the sweat of his brow, has a just title to it against the universe." Calhoun, "Speech on the Revenue Collection Bill, . . . delivered in the Senate, February 15 and 16, 1833," Works, II, 234.

⁷¹ Calhoun, "Disquisition," ibid., I, 57.

John Crowe Ransom's apparent dislike of a "community whose every lady member is sworn to see that her mate is not eclipsed in the competition for material advantages." To be sure, Calhoun would probably approve of Ransom's yearning for "stability" and "establishment" if Ransom would say that it is only the lower levels of society who must be urged not to "fume," "fret," or stay "in perpetual physical motion."⁷² Ransom has not, however, limited to the lower classes his attack on the spirit of competitiveness.⁷³

An amusingly circumspect statement by Lytle, recently, shows that when pressed he is willing to argue, with Calhoun, that the upper classes have a right to be guaranteed the fruits of their acquisitiveness. Lytle--a St. George who, as we have seen, has been wont to attack the dragon of monopoly capitalism--has announced a "change of tactics." No longer, apparently, does he view through Taylorian glasses those devices (tariff, etc.) by means of which big businessmen and financiers get government aid in their accumulating of wealth. Lytle is now ready to align himself with great corporate businesses against any members of the laboring classes who feel these businesses are irresponsibly amassing profits. His language is admittedly obscure and will be allowed to speak for itself. Commenting on the contrast between the probable behavior of Southern traditionalists of today and their behavior in the period after

⁷² Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 10.

⁷³ Ibid.

they took their stand in 1930, Lytle says:

there is no need to walk over the tracks of twenty years ago, except to add one thing that seems clearer now than then. The South may well become the salvation of this country yet, both at home and abroad. Private property, controlled by the proprietor, may be the only restraining influence to remind us that the great corporate business has something private about it. The time will come, otherwise, when it will seem more efficient for the state to take over. In this sense there will be the change of tactics from twenty years ago: the enemy will become an ally of sorts. 74

Thus Lytle smokes the peace pipe with "great corporate business" and the men who have "bettered their condition" by rising to direct mammoth enterprises. It is significant that this passage appears near the end of a little article the central paragraphs of which celebrate Calhoun. Calhoun's "wisdom diminishes that of all his disciples," Lytle declares, and adds, "I take it the Agrarians were pretty much that." The villainous principle that Calhoun fought is both one and legion, Lytle says: it was audible in

Webster's rhetoric It was first heard in the Garden. It is whispered in the mouths of present-day liberalism It says publicly that property rights are hostile to human rights, as if one of the human rights, in American belief, is not the right to own property. It has many skins but one body. It casts off Abolitionism to take on humanitarianism It says in the nature of things all men are created free and equal. 75

⁷⁴ Lytle, "How Many Miles to Babylon," Hopkins Review, VI (Spring-Summer, 1953), 103-104.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 102-103. Was Calhoun thinking of the "liberalism" and "humanitarianism" (in Lytle's sense of the terms) implicit in abolitionism when he warned that the first "victims" of the spirit behind abolitionism would be the "wealthy and talented of the North"? See Calhoun to Duff Green, August 30, 1835, Correspondence, p. 344.

Lytle blithely ignores here the distinction which the Vanderbilt Traditionalists have claimed to make between great corporate properties and small individually owned and operated properties. The sovereignty of the giant corporation and its right to increase its holdings ad infinitum are implied by Lytle's willingness to lump its property rights in the same category with the property rights of the small or middling property owners. Clearly repudiated by Lytle is the Jeffersonian serpent which holds before men the ideal of freedom and equality of opportunity.

Richard M. Weaver's use of the Calhounian phrase "equality of condition"⁷⁶ (although he does not mention the term's parent-hood) suggests that in the present state of American society, he (like Lytle) would defend the enterprising financial and industrial classes against regulatory measures or to benefit the lower laboring classes. The concomitants of Weaver's argument must be studied at some length, as summary is likely to leave out the subtle shadings of his thought.

Weaver is primarily concerned to prove that "an undefined equalitarianism" is one of the most "insidious" ideas loose in society today. Sagely Weaver declares (echoing, presumably, Chancellor William Harper of South Carolina): "An American political writer of the last century, confronted with the statement that all men are created free and equal, asked whether it would not be more accurate to say that no man was ever created

⁷⁶ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 44.

free and no two men ever created equal."⁷⁷ That democracy can promise equality before the law in no deeper sense than can other political forms is asserted by Weaver when he says that "if it [democracy] promises equality before the law, it does no more than empires and monarchies have done and cannot use this as a ground to assert superiority."⁷⁸ The claim that democracy means greater equality of opportunity for advancement or that democracy is "quicker to recognize native worth" is refuted, says Weaver, by "the jealous demand for conformity" with which "every visitor to a democratic society has been struck."⁷⁹ Finally the claim of pure democrats that democracy can and should promise "equality of condition" is entirely vicious, "because one law for the ox and the lion is tyranny."⁸⁰ Weaver parallels Calhoun in insisting on security for the rich who have used their freedom, resourcefulness, and thrift to amass great wealth.⁸¹ Thus Weaver describes the "spoiled" lower and middle classes who resent the upper classes' successful

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 41. Chancellor Harper's words: "Is it not palpably nearer the truth to say that no man was ever born free and that no two men were ever born equal, than to say that all men are born free and equal? . . . Man is born to subjection . . . The proclivity of the natural man is to domineer or to be subservient." Quoted in Dodd's The Cotton Kingdom, pp. 56-57.

⁷⁸ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, p. 44.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸¹ Weaver, like Lytle, indulges in attacks on finance capitalism when he feels like doing so. See pp. 132-133 of ibid. The "spoiled masses" ought not to indulge in similar attacks, Weaver apparently feels.

use of their opportunities to better themselves. Like Calhoun, Weaver is by implication demanding freedom and security for the upper classes to advance in wealth when he says that the tendency "to castigate 'economic royalists,' 'managers of industry,' and all who on any grounds could be considered privileged . . . looks alarmingly like a dull hatred of every form of personal superiority."⁸² In tones that remind us of Calhoun and other Old Southerners' prediction that free labor might soon attack capital,⁸³ Weaver continues:

Regularly in the day of social disintegration there occur systematic attacks upon capital. Though capital may, on the one hand, be the result of unproductive activity--or of "theft," as left-wingers might declare--on the other hand, it may be the fruit of industry and foresight, of self-denial, or of some superiority of gifts. The attack upon capital is not necessarily an attack upon inequity. In the times which we describe [i.e., the present] it is likely to be born of love of ease, detestation of discipline, contempt for the past; for, after all, an accumulation of capital represents an extension of past effort into the present. But self-pampering, present-minded modern man looks neither before nor after; he marks inequalities of condition and, forbidden by his dogmas to admit inequalities of merit, moves to obliterate them. The outcry comes masked as an assertion that property rights should not be allowed to stand in the way of human rights, which would be well enough if human rights had not been divorced from duties. But as it is, the mass simply decides that it can get something without submitting to the discipline of work and proceeds to dispossess. Sir Flinders Petrie has written: "When democracy

⁸² Ibid., p. 126.

⁸³ Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, February 8, 1834, Correspondence, pp. 331-332; Calhoun to Duff Green, August 30, 1835, ibid., pp. 344-345. See also William John Grayson's "Mackay's Travels in America: The Dual Form of Labor," De Bow's Review, XXVIII (January, 1860), 60; and William Gilmore Simms' "The Southern Convention," Southern Quarterly Review, XVIII (September, 1850), 198.

has attained full power, the majority without capital necessarily eat up the capital of the minority, and the civilization steadily decays."⁸⁴

Weaver is here primarily concerned that the wealthy proprietors or investors should be secure in the possession of what they acquire. He sets no limits on their acquisitiveness--or, more accurately, he sets no limits presently enforceable by means other than those proprietors' or investors' spiritual self-control.

As we have seen, both Lytle and Weaver reveal indirectly if not openly, that they find somewhat congenial not only Calhoun's argument favoring a fixed status for the laboring class but also Calhoun's argument favoring freedom and security for the more fortunate individuals who "better their condition." Tate is more single-minded. He takes only one half of Calhoun's social philosophy--the pro-slavery half--and generalizes upon it. We cannot know whether Tate has forgotten or is simply ignoring the Disquisition's picture of the social benefits springing from the desire of middle and upper class men to get ahead. At any rate, Tate makes the following assertion in his best ex cathedra manner: Calhoun "argued justly that only in a society of fixed classes can men be free."⁸⁵ It seems likely that Tate, in presenting Calhoun as the advocate of fixed classes on every level of society, is generalizing not from Calhoun's complete social theory but from Calhoun's remarks in defense of slavery for one class--the Negro

⁸⁴ Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 126-127.

⁸⁵ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

laborers. What Calhoun actually says is that it is easier to construct and maintain free political institutions in a society whose laboring class is made up of Negro slaves than it is to maintain such free institutions in a society whose laborers are free men.⁸⁶ Tate fails to report Calhoun's thought accurately. Whereas Calhoun, as we have seen, began with two facts--Negro slavery and the desire of many individuals of the middle and upper white groups to better their own condition--and constructed a theory to accommodate both facts, Tate takes Calhoun's pro-slavery argument alone and extracts from it an image of Calhoun as proponent of fixed classes for all men--both black and white.

Defense of Slavery

Not only is Tate's version of Calhoun's general attitude toward social classes inaccurate; his representation of Calhoun's pro-slavery argument is quite misleading. "[S]lavery was a positive good," Tate asserts, "only in the sense that Calhoun had argued it was: it had become a necessary element in a stable society."⁸⁷ This makes Calhoun's argument sound rather innocuous. If only Tate had given a footnote for his statement!

⁸⁶ See the following speeches by Calhoun for variations on this idea: "Speech on the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, March 9, 1836," Works, II, 489; "Remarks . . . on . . . the Rights of the States and the Abolition of Slavery, December 27, 1837, et seq.," ibid., III, 180; "Speech on the reception of the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, February 6, 1837," ibid., II, 632; "Remarks in Reply to Mr. Simmons, on his Resolutions; made in the Senate, February 20, 1847," ibid., IV, 360-361. See also Calhoun to James H. Hammond, February 18, 1837, Correspondence, p. 369.

⁸⁷ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

We may suspect that, if he had done so, it might have referred not to Calhoun's writings but to the following passage in Christopher Hollis's The American Heresy: "The old Southern slavery had been, at least, one of the institutions of a stable society."⁸⁸ Calhoun's emphasis is entirely different from Tate's and Hollis's representations of his thought. He does, it is true, argue that the institution of slavery has the sanctity of age and that it is impossible to substitute any other arrangement: "The relation which now exists between the two races in the slaveholding States has existed for two centuries," Calhoun reminds the advocates of social change. He insists that this relation "has entered into and modified all our institutions, civil and political," and that "[n]one other can be substituted."⁸⁹ Calhoun does not, however, imply that slavery is merely one of many elements which make up the peculiarly happy stability of Southern civilization. Contrary to the implication of Tate's statement, Calhoun does not regard the stability of Southern society as an entity which would have existed even without the peculiar historical accident of Negro slavery. As a matter of fact, Calhoun implies that whatever stability Southern society may possess is mainly due to the

⁸⁸ Hollis, The American Heresy, p. 168. This statement follows a passage in which Hollis has attributed to Calhoun a love of the agrarian order's stability and a hatred of the industrial society's perpetual and restless discarding of tradition. Hollis characterizes Calhoun's thought as follows: "A people, he thought, must live upon its traditions or perish, and industrial capitalism, whose very advertisement was that it was daily changing man's material condition of life, was the enemy." Ibid.

⁸⁹ Calhoun, "Speech on the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, March 9, 1836," Works, II, 488.

happy chance of its having a Negro slave labor force. Slavery as it exists in the South, says Calhoun,

forms the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable political institutions. It is useless to disguise the fact. There is and always has been in an advanced stage of wealth and civilization, a conflict between labor and capital. The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict. 90

Rhett is more concise and even more emphatic than Calhoun as to the crucial importance of slavery: "No republic has ever yet been long maintained without the institution of slavery,"⁹¹ declares Rhett.

Calhoun's defense of slavery is no mere acquiescence in the institution as "a necessary element in a stable society."⁹² When Calhoun claims the South's Negro slavery to be "the best substratum of population in the world" and the "one on which

⁹⁰ Calhoun, "Speech on the reception of the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, February 6, 1837," Works, II, 632.

August O. Spain, when he discusses the Vanderbilt Agrarians' interpretation of Calhoun, does not admit Calhoun's specifically attributing Southern stability to the institution of slavery. Spain says that both Calhoun and the Vanderbilt writers "feel that an agrarian regime offers more social harmony and stability" than an industrial regime. See Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 271. Spain's statement by-passes Calhoun's emphasis on slavery as a source of stability.

⁹¹ Robert Barnwell Rhett's Address to the People of Beaufort and Collettin Districts upon the Subject of Abolition (Charleston, 1838), p. 8, as quoted in William Sumner Jenkins' Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill, 1935), p. 197. Cf. William John Grayson's paraphrase of and comment on Calhoun's Aristotelian doctrine that slavery is a component of a democracy. William J. Grayson, "Mackay's Travels in America: The Dual Form of Labor," De Bow's Review, XXVIII (January, 1860), pp. 59-60.

⁹² Tate's version of Calhoun's argument that slavery was a positive good. See Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

great and flourishing Commonwealths may be most easily and safely reared,"⁹³ he clearly places himself in the "mudsill" school of Southern slavery apologists. That Tate does not note this fact about Calhoun is due either to ignorance or to unwillingness to soil the visage of that statesman whom, he says, it is "just possible to see as the Christ . . . of political order in the United States."⁹⁴ That Tate does not subscribe to the "mudsill" theory of the Old South's greatness and that he knows it is not tactful to subscribe to it are suggested by his invidious remarks on Alexander H. Stephens' famous speech propounding the theory. Tate calls "highly un-philosophical"⁹⁵ Stephens' speech (in 1861) which "glorified" the Southern structure as "forever severed from the North and rising upon Negro slavery, 'the cornerstone of our new edifice.'"⁹⁶ Tate thoughtfully adds: "The speech was reported in England, where it embarrassed Mr. Yancey and did the Abolitionist cause much good."⁹⁷ We may thoughtfully ask the following question: has Tate done the Vanderbilt Traditionalist cause much good by his failure to admit that their prophet and Messiah, Calhoun, also pictures Negro slavery as the best foundation for a commonwealth?

⁹³ Calhoun to James H. Hammond, February 18, 1837, Correspondence, p. 369.

⁹⁴ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 38.

⁹⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 40.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 119. The concluding phrase is Alexander H. Stephens'.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

That Tate wishes to save another of his favorite Old Southerners, in addition to Calhoun, from being exposed as a believer in slavery per se is suggested by his aggrieved tone in his review of Avery O. Craven's Edmund Ruffin, Southerner: A Study in Secession. Tate complains that Craven's treatment of his subject is "apologetic." Craven "seems to feel that he ought not to take Ruffin too seriously," Tate declares. "There is too much pointless sarcasm about 'Virginia gentlemen,'" Tate adds,

pointless because the author sets it forth from no well defined point of view that opposes coherent values to those which he attacks; the satire is personal and thus in questionable taste (Ruffin was) a man whose genius alone set him apart from a society of which he was otherwise typical On the whole it may be said that Professor Craven has missed a fine opportunity to use his social imagination on a rare figure. 98

We may suspect from Tate's handling of Calhoun that he would like Ruffin to appear as the defender of a stable agrarian society and only incidentally as the proponent of slavery. A reading of Craven's book shows that Craven does not limit himself to Ruffin's devotion to agriculture and his attack on

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Tate, "The Prophet of Secession" [review of Avery Craven's Edmund Ruffin, Southerner], New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 25, 26. That Tate intended to make his own defense of Ruffin is indicated by Hound and Horn's announcement (shortly before it ceased publication in 1934) of a forthcoming article by Tate on Ruffin.

Craven denied that he had intended to be sarcastic. See Craven, "Not Writ Sarcastick" [correspondence: reply to Tate's review], New Republic, LXXII (September 21, 1932), 156. Craven suggested that Tate was not very familiar with Southern history and was unduly sensitive to non-Southern writers on the South.

the tariff and the industrial system.⁹⁹ Whereas Tate apparently wishes to acknowledge only Ruffin's prophesying the "effect of machinery on the industrial system, . . . periodically increasing unemployment, the irresponsible exploitation of labor, and the eventual drift of the system toward socialism for its salvation,"¹⁰⁰ Craven presents without equivocation Ruffin's single-minded conviction that slavery was the only way to save society.

It is, doubtless, Craven's exposure of Ruffin's reliance on slavery for salvation (rather than merely Craven's exclamatory remarks on gentlemen)¹⁰¹ that annoys Tate. According to Ruffin (as Craven presents him) slavery is not merely superior to the modern industrial free labor system; slavery is in fact, says Ruffin, the only alternative, with the exception of socialism, to the exploitive free labor system.¹⁰² Craven's Ruffin sees no thriving peasantry as an ideal substratum for society. The socialistic (or industrial) doctrine that "[a]ssociated labor and mass production" are "more economical"¹⁰³ is correct. According to Craven, Ruffin holds that "[a]ll civilization,

⁹⁹ Avery Craven, Edmund Ruffin, Southerner: A Study in Secession (New York, 1932), pp. 49-94, 46-47, 131-132.

¹⁰⁰ Tate, "The Prophet of Secession," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 25.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Craven's remark on Ruffin's feeling of superiority to the herd in matters of taste: "It was . . . a gentleman's privilege to speak the truth in the Old South, and gentlemen were forever exercising their privileges." Craven, Edmund Ruffin, Southerner, p. 16.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹⁰³ Craven's paraphrase of Ruffin's ideas. Ibid., p. 133.

even in its most advanced forms, rests upon some kind of exploitation of the many by the few."¹⁰⁴ Forced labor is a necessity if society is to advance or even to maintain itself at a high cultural level.¹⁰⁵ Ruffin deludes himself with no visions of a free peasantry as an alternative to an industrial proletariat in this country. Such a development was impossible: competition with an industrial order which used the more efficient method of mass production would drive the "'peasant-proprietors'" into a subhuman state. Craven presents, without hedging, Ruffin's contrast between free peasants and slaveholding farmers:

In slavery alone he [Ruffin] found salvation from peasantry. Under freedom each rural family was forced to [engage in] intensive and continual toil to the neglect of social pleasures and the highest intellectual improvement. Even the negro slaves enjoyed "more comfort and pleasure, than the wretched and hard-working peasant-proprietors." The city tended to draw away the best elements from the rural world and to hold a monopoly on the intelligence of the region [e.g., the Northwest, which did not have slavery]. Soon, under these forces, gain became the sole object of endeavor in farming--industry, economy and frugality the great virtues. In a few generations, under such conditions, the people who remained in the country were "rude in manners and greatly deficient in refinement of feeling and cultivation of mental and social qualities."

Such was the condition of farmers in France and Britain, such the general trend in the North.

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How different the rural scene under slavery! "This institution, . . . by confining the drudgery and brutalizing effects of continued toil, or menial

¹⁰⁴ Craven's paraphrase of Ruffin's ideas. Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰⁵ Craven's paraphrase of Ruffin's ideas. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

service, to the inferior race . . . , gives to the superior race leisure and other means to improve the mind, taste and manners." Here alone white men were truly free, here farmers in their true station. "The most distinguished men, and especially statesmen of the South were . . . often natives and continued residents of the country." Even lesser men, with comparatively few acres [but, be it noted, presumably using slave labor], found time for relaxation and for the improvement of mind and manners. The use of slave labor and extensive methods relaxed the constant attention to petty details and small economies that kept the spirit of gain ever in the mind of the Northern farmer and fostered an easy-going attitude which made for tolerance and larger human interests. Men were less materially minded; the family was a real institution; sons and daughters grew up "under the influence of social communication." No wonder the "intelligent" strangers admired and praised the "domestic manners and refinement of the Southern country population." The South was the one spot where a farmer was also a gentleman, and could remain so. 106

Surely it is misleading to cite Ruffin's attack on the free industrial labor system, as Tate does, without also noting that Ruffin attributed the virtues of Southern agricultural society to the slavery system, which provided forced labor for the performance of routine tasks. Agricultural mass production is Ruffin's alternative to mass production under the industrial system. Craven's discussion shows that Ruffin is clearly an exponent of the "black mudsill" defense of Old Southern civilization. It is only at the price of averting his eyes from this aspect of Ruffin that Tate can safely parade Ruffin as one of his heroes.

106 Ibid., pp. 139-140. Craven is paraphrasing and quoting from the following: Ruffin, "The Influence of Slavery, or of its Absence, on Manners, Morals, and Intellect," pp. 25-31; entry of August 28, 1862, Ruffin Diary, Library of Congress.

Another complication which Tate does not care to report in his enthusiasm over Edmund Ruffin, the agricultural reformer¹⁰⁷ and the critic of the industrial system, is the probability that Ruffin's reforms cemented the hold of slavery more firmly. According to Craven, Ruffin found the Negro slave "just as efficient in applying manure, spreading manure, mowing clover, binding wheat, cultivating corn, or butchering hogs as he had been in the wholesale destroying of land with his crude hoe in tobacco fields." Ruffin discovered that the slave could handle the most complicated agricultural machinery of the day competently. Craven concludes that Ruffin was "no nearer to replacing [slave labor] . . . with free white labor than was the most optimistic planter of cotton in Alabama or Mississippi." And Craven warns: "[t]hose who have so enthusiastically declared that slavery would have passed when expansion ceased will do well to consider the institution in this oldest of slavery regions."¹⁰⁸ Tate probably resents Craven's emphasis on Ruffin's contentment with the efficiency of Negro slave labor. For one respect in which Tate clearly does not uphold the pro-slavery argument is in its contention

¹⁰⁷ For Tate's comment on the influence of Ruffin's agricultural reforms, see Tate, "Prophet of Secession," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 26.

¹⁰⁸ Craven, Edmund Ruffin, Southerner, pp. 86-87. Avery Craven's more recent statement that at the time of the Civil War slavery "may have been almost ready to break down of its own weight" is criticized by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Avery Craven as quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review, (October, 1949), 974. Craven's more recent views are closer to the views of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists.

that black slave labor is efficient.¹⁰⁹ "It was generally conceded" in the Old South, Tate remarks in an authoritative tone, "that a Negro could not or would not work as fast as a white man."¹¹⁰

Even more interesting than the complicated ways in which Tate and Lytle generalize upon or expurgate the pro-slavery argument are the instances in which some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists simply reiterate the good features of slavery. In the first place, Tate, Lytle, and Ransom accept the pro-slavery writers' contention that in practice slaveholders generally treated their property kindly. The virtues of paternalism are favorably presented in the writings of Tate and Lytle; and it is suggested by them that a sense of organic community was the rule and was in fact the natural concomitant of the plantation slavery regime. In the second place, some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists accept the notion that slavery was the natural level for the Negroes. Finally, one of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists, as we shall see, points out that the presence of slavery prevented the small white man from feeling socially inferior.

Tate deduces from what he says are Calhoun's principles

¹⁰⁹ One wonders whether Tate is acquainted with such a boast as Calhoun's that the South had the "most efficient . . . and well-trained body of laborers for [the] . . . cultivation" of the "great staples." Calhoun, "Remarks Made at the Meeting of the Citizens of Charleston, . . . March 9, 1947," Works, IV, 395.

¹¹⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 35. Note that Tate's remarks blames the Negro, not the institution of slavery, for the slow pace of the work.

the notion that the slave labor system provided a set of conditions (an "external order,"¹¹¹ he would call it) which encouraged the slaveholder's fulfillment of his obligations toward the slave. Starting with Calhoun's alleged argument that "only in a society of fixed classes can men be free,"¹¹² Tate first establishes the principle that "[o]nly men who are socially as well as economically secure can preserve the historical sense of obligation."¹¹³ The implication is that a society clearly stratified throughout is the milieu in which men can develop a social conscience--that is, a clear conception of their duties in relation to men in other strata of society. "The historical sense of obligation implied a certain freedom to do right," Tate declares; and he then brings forward the patriarchal justification of slavery: "In the South, between White and Black, it [the historical sense of obligation or the freedom to do right] took the form of benevolent protection: the White man was in every sense responsible for the Black."¹¹⁴

Tate heightens his pro-slavery argument by emphasizing that by the late 1840's the Northern people--in contrast to the Southern slaveholder--were rapidly losing the "freedom to do right." "In the North," says Tate, "the historical sense was atrophied, and the feeling of obligation did not exist.

¹¹¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 40.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 39. We have seen on pp. 192-200n of this dissertation that this is not precisely Calhoun's argument. Calhoun advocates a fixed status only for the slave laboring population and, occasionally, by implication, for the lower free laboring class, as has been pointed out.

¹¹³ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The White man, 'free,' was beginning to be exploited." The Northerners' failure to remember that their great-grandfathers had been slave traders is linked by Tate with the fact that feelings of obligation and loyalty (such as Tate observed in Southern society between master and slave) did not inform Northern society:

Men, whose great-grandfathers had sold the Indians to the West Indian traders and had got negroes in return, whom they sold to the Virginians, did not feel themselves to be involved in the transaction. The Northern men did not feel responsible for this procedure; lacking the historical sense, they could repudiate it in the name of morality. They had come to believe in abstract right. Where abstract right supplants obligation, interest begins to supplant loyalty. Revolution may follow.

Tate pictures the society toward which the North was headed as a sorry contrast to the Old South with its slaveholders who had the freedom to be benevolent toward their slaves. When such a revolution as the North was developing towards "triumphs," says Tate,

society becomes a chaos of self-interest. Its freedom is the freedom to do wrong. This does not mean that all men will do the wrong thing; only that no external order exists which precludes the public exercise of wrong impulses; too much, in short, is left to the individual. It was such a revolution that the Northern States were now moving towards. 115

Tate will not admit that the modern free labor system under corporate capitalism gives the corporation president any "freedom to do right"¹¹⁶ toward his labor. If a corporation by chance chooses to give its labor "numerous 'social services,'" "

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40. Italics mine.

¹¹⁶ The phrase is quoted from *ibid.*, p. 39.

Tate can only remark acidly that it is giving in "sheer humanitarian ebullience" or "philanthropy" what is already due the laborer as a "fruit of his labor."¹¹⁷ But the sow-belly, Christmas gifts, and delightful cabins personally given to the Old Southern slave by his master were, Tate evidently believes, an expression of the slaveholder's "historical sense of obligation," his "freedom to do right"--a freedom which expressed itself in "benevolent protection" of his labor.¹¹⁸ "For society as a whole," Tate declares,

the modern system [of free industrial labor] is probably inferior to that of slavery; the classes are not so closely knit [as they were under the slavery regime]; and the employer [today] feels responsible to no law but his own desire. Industrialism comes in the end to absentee landlordism on a grand scale; this was comparatively rare in the Old South. ¹¹⁹

In other words, slavery with the owner on the grounds is preferable to a free labor system with an "absentee landlord." Tate apparently prefers the union of ownership and responsibility which he thinks the master's possession of his slave implied to the fragmentation of ownership and control which the modern corporate system involves. The corporate system, Tate thinks, makes a sense of responsibility toward one's property or one's

¹¹⁷ Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 85-86.

¹¹⁸ Only the quoted phrases are from Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

¹¹⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

labor impossible.¹²⁰ We have lost our "freedom to do right."

In general, when Tate is describing the practice of slavery, he follows more closely the ideology of Calhoun and other Old Southern conservatives than he does when he is describing Calhoun's abstract thought on social classes in general. Although, unlike Calhoun, he denies that slavery is good per se ("[n]o slavery system is good simply because it involves slavery")¹²¹ Tate presents a defense of the slaveholders' paternalism which parallels in substance, if not in fervor, the reasoning of Calhoun and other Old Southern pro-slavery writers. The planter's ownership and personal control of his laborers (even though it was a kind of "despotism") led him, as a rule, to treat them well, Tate declares:

The despotism, but for rare exceptions, was benevolent, for it was to the planter's interest, aside from his kindness, to keep his "people" healthy and contented. It was an obligation rarely shirked. On the whole it may be said that out of the great evil of slavery had come a certain good: the master and the slave were forever bound by ties of association and affection that exceeded all considerations of interest. ¹²²

¹²⁰ See, for example, Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 85-86 et passim. For a somewhat fantastic elaboration of Tatean ideas on the irresponsibility of the owner of corporate property and the peculiar responsibility of the slaveowner, see Brainerd Cheney, "The Conservative Course by Celestial Navigation," Sewanee Review, LXII (Winter, 1954), 158.

¹²¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 72.

¹²² Ibid., p. 43. Cf. Ransom's remark that "[s]lavery was a feature [of Old Southern society] monstrous enough in theory, but, more often than not, humane in practice." Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 14. See also Warren's similar, though slightly less idealized, picture of slavery in the South: "since immediate contact existed between master and slave, an exercise of obligation reached downward as well as upward and the negro's condition was tolerable enough. The system was subject to grave abuse, but economic considerations bolstered whatever litt decency the slaveholder possessed, for the slave was valuable property and it was only natural that the master would take care to give his property such treatment as would not jeopardize its value." Robert Penn Warren, John Brown: The Making of a Martyr (New York, 1929), p. 331.

In his enthusiasm over paternalism, Tate can sometimes forget that there was any substantial evil in slavery. On one occasion, Tate appears to accept what he says is Ulrich B. Phillips' contention that the evil in slavery was merely abstract--that is, in practice, for the most part non-existent--whereas the good in the institution was very concrete. The "condition [of the slaves] was not different from that of other laboring classes except that it bore the stigma of a word hateful to the nineteenth century, and that they were certain of care, often affectionate, to their grave"¹²³--in these words Tate, ostensibly echoing Phillips, characterizes the slaveowners' benevolent protection of his labor. Tate would not, with James H. Hammond, label the "primitive and patriarchal" slave labor system a "sacred and natural system"--but Tate's concrete description of the slave system is quite similar to Hammond's picture of the system as one "in which the laborer is under the personal control of a fellow-being endowed with the sentiments and sympathies of humanity."¹²⁴ The plantation becomes in Tate's

¹²³ Tate, "Life in the Old South" [review of Life and Labor in the Old South, by Ulrich B. Phillips], New Republic, LIX (July 10, 1929), 211.

¹²⁴ James H. Hammond, "Letter on Slavery," in The Pro-Slavery Argument, pp. 162 ff., as quoted in Wilfred Cargill's "The Slaveholders' Indictment of Northern Wage Slavery," Journal of Southern History, VI (November, 1940), 513. Calhoun makes essentially the same description of slavery, in terms less sentimental than those of either Tate or Hammond, when he asks whether the "more direct, simple, and patriarchal mode by which the labor of the African race is, among us, commanded by the European" does not compare favorably with other labor systems. Calhoun maintains that in few countries has so much been "left to the share of the laborer, and so little extracted from him, or . . . more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age." Calhoun, "Speech on the reception of the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, February 6, 1837," Works, II, 631. The idea was of course a common one among pro-slavery writers.

hands a community made one by the singleness of interest and the personal relations between the master and the slaves. Tate's sympathetic generalizations about plantation paternalism and his easy emphasis on the idea that it was to the planter's interest to treat his property well sometimes make Tate almost parallel in complacency the Calhoun who facilely declared that "[e]very plantation is a little community, with the master at its head, who concentrates in himself the united interests of capital and labor, of which he is the common representative."¹²⁵

Calhoun's picture of the plantation as a stable little community¹²⁶ is somewhat paralleled by Lytle when he praises the planter for his "feudal organism which could produce for consumption even while producing for exchange." Lytle maintains that "[i]f it had not been disrupted by war, it would have stood without strikes, or unemployment, even if the demand for cotton had failed."¹²⁷ Though Calhoun would perhaps not have used the word "feudal" as a term of praise, he would have agreed with

¹²⁵ Calhoun, "Remarks . . . on . . . the Rights of the States and the Abolition of Slavery, December 27, 1837, at seq.," Works, III, 180.

¹²⁶ August O. Spain mentions that the Vanderbilt Agrarians "admire the patriarchial [sic] ideal of community responsibility for the well-being of the neighborhood, which Calhoun claimed for the plantation regime." Spain, Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 271. Spain does not elaborate or document this remark but he may have in mind such passages as I have cited from Tate and Calhoun. See also footnote 206 on p. 250 of this dissertation.

¹²⁷ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 431-432.

Lytle in envisaging the plantation as an economic and social organism. Lytle's picture suggests, as does Calhoun's, a singleness of interest among the members of the plantation community--a singleness of interest founded on the idea that in each other, master and slave saw visible security (that is, food, shelter, and clothing). From Lytle's picture of the plantation may be derived, incidentally, a reconciliation between two of Tate's seemingly contradictory ideas--the idea that the nearer a society is to "personal production for use" the "freer" it is¹²⁸ and the idea that the slave labor system of the Old South was probably better for society than the present free industrial labor system is.¹²⁹ The reconciliation is simple: if the slaves produced their own food, they were "freer," in Tate's sense of the word, than is the modern factory worker who helps to produce a brand of toothpaste that he never uses.

Both Tate and Lytle have appealed to their plantation image in order to pass judgment on the twentieth-century tenant and sharecropping systems which enslave both landlord and tenant. Lytle attributes to Calhoun a premonitory vision of the tenant system:

Calhoun argued [says Lytle] that the freedom of the negro would reduce both classes to slavery,¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? p. 84.

¹²⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

¹³⁰ Calhoun's typical prophecy was that the freeing of the Negro would lead to Negro supremacy in the South. See the following of Calhoun's speeches: "Speech on the reception of the Abolition Petitions, delivered in the Senate, February 6, 1837," Works, II 633; "Speech on the Amendment . . . establishing a Territorial Government for Oregon, and proposing to extend the Missouri Compromise Line to the Pacific Ocean; delivered in the Senate, August 12, 1849," ibid., IV, 530.

and anyone familiar with the present relations between the tenant farmer and his landlord will not deny this. Each class in its fight for self-preservation has developed an elaborate practice of oppression. 131

Under the sharecropping system, says Tate, the Negro is "half-slave and half-free," deprived as he is of the "natural protectors he had under slavery."¹³² Davidson, in spite of his abstract resentment of the "imperializing industrialist"--who (Davidson says) is to blame for the Southern plantation owner's being "forced to adopt a cash relationship toward his tenants"¹³³--finds when that relationship is being criticized by others¹³⁴ that the cash system retains (in an area with which he is familiar) the virtues of the slave system. Speaking of Macon County, Georgia, Davidson delivers himself of the following mellow reflections, intended to cast the halo of the Old Southern plantation around its twentieth-century counterpart: the white people in the Macon County area, says Davidson,

in nothing . . . seem more admirable than in their relations with the Negroes, who here outnumber white people, three to one. The old master-slave relation . . . seems to have developed here into nothing so alarming as, say, in Arkansas. The old feeling of white responsibility and of black loyalty and devotion seem to have carried over, partially at least, into the modern regime, and one

¹³¹ Lytle, "Principles of Secession," Hound and Horn, V (July-September, 1932), 693.

¹³² Tate, "Knowledge and Reporting," Free America, III (November, 1939), 19.

¹³³ Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 196.

¹³⁴ Donald Davidson, "Erskine Caldwell's Picture Book," Southern Review, IV (Summer, 1938), 22.

would think this the last place to which the agitator and reformer would ever have the impulse to penetrate.

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[This happy survival of the plantation system in the tenant system of Macon County ought to lead the sociologist] to ask whether it may not be specially adapted to its local situation and should not, therefore, constitute a notable exception to the general and widespread necessity of remedying agricultural disability by checking tenancy and distributing ownership more widely.¹³⁵

Resenting the sociologist Arthur Raper's theory that the planter exploits the Negro partly because of an obscure need for a scapegoat, Davidson insists that it would be "nearer the actual sociological truth to say that something like the old master-slave relation hangs on merely because both races are used to it and like it."¹³⁶ Davidson has in mind plantation owners like the Cousin Roderick of his essay "Still Rebels, Still Yankees." In Cousin Roderick, the ideal of the paternal master (not, be it noted, of the independent yeoman farmer) is still incarnate, according to Davidson:

On [Cousin Roderick's] . . . several tracts of land, the gatherings of inheritance and purchase, are some one hundred and fifty Negroes whom he furnishes housing, food, and a little money; they do his labor--men, women, children together--they are his "hands." He is expected to call them by name, to get them out of jail, to doctor them, even sometimes to bury them when "lodge dues" may

¹³⁵ Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 178, 203. See also ibid., pp. 199-202 and footnote 105 on p. 142 of this dissertation.

¹³⁶ Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 194. See also Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 304. Difficult to reconcile with these remarks of Davidson is Ransom's pious and doubtless sincere statement: "It is not true that certain Southern 'agrarians,' so far as I know them, look back to slavery, and that the sort of society they have in mind could ever have depended on slavery." John Crowe Ransom [Review of Forces in American Criticism, by Bernard Smith], Free America, IV (January, 1940), 20.

have lapsed. They are no longer his slaves; but though they do not now utter the words, they do not allow him to forget that he has the obligations of a master.¹³⁷

Davidson dares the "experts" to "put a stigma upon" the good life as lived by Cousin Roderick, his family, and their friends in Rebelville, Georgia.¹³⁸ Davidson himself is obviously charmed by the opportunities which the white people in Rebelville have "to hear the voices of Negroes, sifting through the dusk, or the mockingbird in the moonlight; or to see the dark pines against sunset, and the old house lifting its columns far away, calling the wanderer home."¹³⁹

Although Tate and Lytle have echoed Calhoun in presenting the plantation as a community presided over by a benevolent patriarch and although Davidson has undertaken to show that the patriarchal ideal survives in twentieth-century Rebelville, Georgia,¹⁴⁰ none of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists has been able to cite Calhoun himself as an example of a fatherly and religiously kind slaveowner. They have not had the honesty to admit with Christopher Hollis that Calhoun, in effect, held that Negroes were scarcely human,¹⁴¹ but neither have they presented Calhoun as one who was bound to his slaves with ties of

¹³⁷ Davidson, "Still Rebels, Still Yankees," *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-154.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁰ See the immediately preceding pages of this dissertation. See also Davidson, "Still Rebels, Still Yankees," *The Attack on Leviathan*, p. 151.

¹⁴¹ For Hollis's admission that Calhoun's attitude toward slavery and the Negro was not an attitude which could be labelled Christian, see Hollis, *The American Heresy*, pp. 130-138, 174.

personal "association" and "affection" transcending even "interest."¹⁴² The reason is not hard to find. Calhoun, despite his complacent "trust" in his own goodness and kindness as a slaveholder,¹⁴³ does not, when we read his letters, strike us as one who felt much sense of the Negro's spiritual equality with himself.¹⁴⁴ Wholly misleading insofar as it is applied to Calhoun is Lytle's parroting (in his article on Calhoun) Arthur Styron's anti-Puritan contrast between the New Englander who because of his doctrine of Election presumably "denied man's spiritual equality" and the Southerner who because of his "libertarian position" would "never have denied the spiritual equality between his humblest slave and himself."¹⁴⁵ The question is not whether Calhoun would have denied the slave's spiritual equality but whether he acted as if he believed in it. The inordinate admiration of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists for Calhoun and his doctrines and the willingness of Robert Penn Warren to discredit Jefferson's liberalism with an argument ad hominem¹⁴⁶ make it hard for us to resist

¹⁴² The quoted words are from Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

¹⁴³ Calhoun, "Remarks . . . on the Slave Question, made in the Senate, February 19, 1847," Works, IV, 348.

¹⁴⁴ For a not very impressive attempt by a Calhoun admirer to represent Calhoun as a good slaveowner who could even imagine a slave to be a friend, see pp. 285-286 of Margaret L. Coit, John C. Calhoun.

¹⁴⁵ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun" review of Arthur Styron's The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy, Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 515. For Styron's development of these views on New England Puritanism and Southern "libertarianism," see pp. 8-9, 371 of Styron, The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy.

¹⁴⁶ Warren, Brother to Dragons, p. 109.

the opportunity of examining Calhoun in his role of father to one of his slaves--presumably treating the slave as his spiritual equal. On one occasion, Calhoun writes to his brother-in-law:

Aleck, our house servant, gave us the slip yesterday I must ask of you the favour to keep a lookout for him He had offended your sister, and she threatened him, with a severe whipping. He ran away to avoid it; and has left us without a house servant, except females. 147

Five days later, Calhoun addresses his niece's husband as follows:

I am glad to hear that Allick [sic] has been apprehended He ran away for no other cause, but to avoid a correction for some misconduct, and as I am desirous to prevent a repetition, I wish you to have him lodged in Jail for one week, to be fed on bread and water and to employ some one for me to give him 30 lashes well laid on, at the end of the time. I hope you will pardon the trouble. I only give it, because I deem it necessary to our proper security to prevent the formation of the habit of running away, and I think it better to punish him before his return home than afterwards. I will send for him the last of next week.

I am very much gratified to hear that my communication has been so well received by our friends in Abbeville and that the party is doing so well. Our cause is founded in truth and must prevail; or the liberty of the country be lost. 148

Should not a complete image of Calhoun--one which would give us full knowledge of the man--include specific detail such as these letters give? Jefferson's faults and limitations are

¹⁴⁷ Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, August 27, 1831, Correspondence, p. 301.

¹⁴⁸ Calhoun to Armistead Burt, September 1, 1831, ibid., pp. 301-302. "We may wonder whether Aleck had abused his 'inalienable right to talk back.'" See footnote 21 in Chapter III of this dissertation.

clearly marked out by some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists. Is it easier for them to give full allegiance to a gentleman who is, like Ransom's Jehovah, somewhat severe in dealing with inferiors than it is for them to admire the more egalitarian Jefferson?

Among Old Southern pro-slavery arguments the most controversial is perhaps the argument that slavery was the condition in which Negroes naturally belonged because of their inferior intellectual and moral capacities. Tate stands out among the Vanderbilt Traditionalists by virtue of his explicit admission that one of the injustices of the slavery system was the fact that it "gave the talented individual little chance to rise."¹⁴⁹ This admission implies, at least, that Tate is willing to concede the existence of some Negroes whose talents transcended the opportunities offered them by slavery. Ransom, Lytle, Davidson, and Owsley are not so generous.

More surprising than the statements of Owsley, Davidson, and Lytle are Ransom's remarks implying that in the Old South slavery was the status for which the Negroes were, in general, naturally suited. In a cautiously phrased compliment to the ante-bellum South, Ransom declares:

It was a kindly society, yet a realistic one; for it was a failure if it could not be said that people were for the most part in their right places. Slavery was a feature monstrous enough in theory, but, more often than not, humane in practice, and it is impossible to

¹⁴⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

believe that its abolition alone could have effected any great revolution in society. 150

The first half of this compliment resembles William Gilmore Simms' complacent assertion that Southern society, including the slave system, permitted to individuals "the enjoyment of that place in society to which [their] . . . moral [*sic*] and intellect entitle[d] [them]."151 The final portion of Ransom's statement--that "it is impossible to believe that [the] abolition [of slavery] alone could have effected any great revolution in society"--seems to suggest that the Negro would have remained in a subordinate position approximating that of slavery even though slavery had been "abolished."

Owsley simply records in a rather neutral tone the Old Southerners'152 contention that "the Negro was of a backward, inferior race" and that "the only way he could be controlled . . . was by some form of slavery." "In other words," says Owsley, "Calhoun, Fitzhugh, and the 'philosophers of slavery' justified slavery upon the grounds of the 'race question.'"153 Donald Davidson goes over these grounds and finds them still a convincing defense of the South's traditional insistence on defending the doctrine of a special status for the Negro,154

150 Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 14.

151 William Gilmore Simms, "The Morals of Slavery," in The Pro-Slavery Argument, p. 258.

152 Owsley is discussing the thought of James H. Hammond, Calhoun, George Fitzhugh, and Thomas R. Dew. See Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 81.

153 Ibid., p. 82.

154 See, for example, Davidson, "The Dilemma of Southern Liberals," The Attack on Leviathan, pp. 259-270, 323; Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 394-412.

although oddly enough he is incensed at the idea that the Vanderbilt Agrarians should be labelled as sympathetic to a "rationalization of [Chancellor William] Harper and [Thomas R.] Dew."¹⁵⁵ Davidson does not desire to be publicly consigned to the Old Southern school whose thought was predicated on the doctrine of Negro inferiority, but he is reasonably confident that a fixed inferior status is what the Negro wants: "The Negro's acceptance . . . of the rôle the South has given him," says Davidson, "would seem to indicate that he prefers an inferior status, if it be real," to "being a bone of contention."¹⁵⁶ Andrew Nelson Lytle's acquiescence in the idea that the Negro as a race deserved in the Old South (and still deserved in the 1930's) only a clearly subordinate status has already been noted in our discussion of John Taylor.¹⁵⁷

One final parallel between Calhoun's pro-slavery argument and Lytle's lament for the death of the Old South's bi-racial arrangements remains to be noted. Lytle, like Calhoun, points out that the existence of an enslaved alien race prevented the lower class of whites from feeling inferior. "With an entirely

¹⁵⁵ Donald Davidson, "The Class Approach to Southern Problems," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 265-266. See C. Vann Woodward, "Hillbilly Realism," Southern Review, IV (Spring, 1939), 681; and Fletcher, "Education Past and Present," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 119. Note Davidson's later comment on Fletcher's conservative position and on the "contemporary relevance" of the pro-slavery poem The Hireling and the Slave, by William John Grayson. See Davidson, "In Memory of John Gould Fletcher," Poetry, LXXII (December, 1950), 154, 156.

¹⁵⁶ Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 202-203. The meaning of Mr. Davidson's metaphor is not entirely clear. One of the "contenders" over the "bone" is apparently, in Davidson's opinion, the sociologist.

¹⁵⁷ See pp. 131-134 of this dissertation.

different race to serve the rich men as in slavery, the small white man could feel no very strong social inequality," Lytle declares in a sort of dirge on the rise of white tenantry after the Civil War. Does Lytle think the social well-being of the yeoman or small farmer in the Old South depended on the presence of an alien race in bondage? It is significant that Lytle should echo from the words of his idol Calhoun not any comment on the dignity of the small farmer per se but a comment on how the existence of Negro slavery lent dignity to the small white man.¹⁵⁸

V. CALHOUN AND POLITICS

Advocacy and Protection of a Stable Landed Society?

We turn now to the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' interpretation of Calhoun's political role and his contribution to political philosophy. Tate's comment on Calhoun's politics is as laudatory as are his abstracts of Calhoun's social thought--and perhaps even more confusing and misleading. In general, Tate (seconded by Owsley) presents Calhoun as the political defender of a stable, rural culture and the philosophic upholder of minority rights. Calhoun becomes, in Tate's hands, the foe of expansion and the protector of the weak. According to

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Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 214. For Calhoun's development of the idea that slavery made for a feeling of social equality among the whites, see Calhoun "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," Works, IV, 505. See also the record of a conversation on the same theme between John Quincy Adams and Calhoun in 1820: Entry of March 3, 1820, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848, ed. Charles Francis Adams, V (Philadelphia, 1875), 10.

Owsley, Calhoun is the opponent of exploitive legislation which will give one section of the country an advantage at the expense of the people in another section. And as the advocate of the doctrine of the concurrent majority, Calhoun is presented as being for a wider element of consent in government. Davidson and Lytle, as we shall see later, add a few touches of realism to the political aspect of their Calhoun portraits. Owsley's and Tate's versions of Calhoun's politics are in some ways little less than fantastic.

Particularly misleading, because it contains so much truth, is Tate's comment on Calhoun's attitude toward the expansion of slavery. In a rather violent criticism of Polk's inordinate imperialism in provoking war with Mexico in 1846, Tate presents Calhoun as a man who wanted Texas but who was fundamentally against the extension of the South's peculiar labor system:

Calhoun had compromised everything but his honor to acquire Texas: Texas restored the balance of power between the sections. But he had bitterly opposed the Mexican War. He knew it would mean new territory. He knew just as certainly that the North would never let slavery go farther than Texas. He held that Texas was the last slave State, and he was right. He felt that the institutions peculiar to the South might be preserved; they could never be extended. Indeed, he said, the genius of the South lay, not in the extension of her institutions, but in maintaining the existing order of a stable, landed society. 159

It is true that Calhoun opposed the Mexican War--because, for one thing, he thought that its effect would be the acquisition of new territory which would become free.¹⁶⁰ But that Calhoun

¹⁵⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 37-38.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Calhoun to Mrs. T. G. Clemson, December 27, 1846, Correspondence, pp. 715-716.

held it to be the special forte of the South to maintain a non-expanding, stable and landed society is by no means certain. Again, we may wish that Tate had furnished documentation. Does Tate know of Calhoun's statement in 1848 that if the federal government did not interfere with the emigration of Southerners and their slaves into the remaining territory, "climate, soil and other circumstances would fix the line between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States in about 36° 30'?"¹⁶¹ If Tate considers this statement mere bluff provided by Calhoun for the consumption of the Northern audience, what does he make of Calhoun's remarks before his fellow Southerners?--Is Tate aware that Calhoun did not publicly recommend to the South that it sit down and maintain a stable, landed society even within the territorial limits to which, by 1847, he was fearing that the South's peculiar institution might be restricted? Calhoun's remarks at a meeting of citizens in Charleston on March 9, 1847, are as lyrically business-like as the propaganda of a Chamber of Commerce: "If we should prove true to ourselves and our peculiar domestic institution," Calhoun promises the citizens of Charleston,

we shall be great and prosperous, let what will occur. There is no portion of the globe more abundant in resources--agricultural, manufacturing and commercial--than that possessed by us. We count among our productions the great staples of cotton, rice, tobacco and sugar, with the most efficient, well fed, well clad, and well trained body of laborers for their cultivation. In addition to furnishing abundant means for domestic exchange among ourselves, and with the rest of the world, and building up flourishing commercial cities, they would furnish ample resources for revenue. ¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Calhoun, "Speech on the Oregon Bill, delivered in the Senate, June 27, 1848," Works, IV, 505.

¹⁶² Calhoun, Works, IV, 395. Italics mine.

Expansion (economic, if not territorial) is the keyword here--not stability, as Mr. Tate would have it.¹⁶³

Tate's undocumented picture of Calhoun as being primarily the political defender of a stable, landed culture is paralleled by the attempts of Frank L. Owsley to present Calhoun as the fair-haired proponent of an agricultural society per se.¹⁶⁴ Central to Owsley's argument is the idea that Calhoun's "extreme doctrine of state sovereignty was fully evolved in South Carolina before the crusade had begun against slavery."¹⁶⁵ Owsley makes

¹⁶³ Tate has admitted in his essay "The Profession of Letters in the South" (the essay in which he describes Calhoun as a "political defender . . . of the older religious community") that "too much quick cotton money in the Southwest" helped to "strangle . . . in the cradle" the "great Southern ideas." See On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 269, 270. His attempt to believe that Calhoun preserved the faith and maintained a pure devotion to stability is touching. We would like to know what Tate's comment would be on Calhoun's public praise, in 1847, of the Florida Treaty of 1819. This treaty, Calhoun declared, was a good treaty because, among other things, it made profitable the growth of commercial agriculture in the Gulf States. See Calhoun, "Speech in Reply to Mr. Benton of Missouri, Delivered in the Senate, February 24, 1847," Works, IV, 367. Charles M. Wiltse emphasizes Calhoun's vision, especially in the 1840's, of "bigger and ever bigger yields of cotton, which were to give comfortable livings to himself and his children, and were to give the South almost boundless wealth and power." See Charles M. Wiltse, John C. Calhoun: Sectionalist, 1840-1850 (Indianapolis, 1951), p. 132.

¹⁶⁴ I do not, of course, deny that Calhoun personally expressed a liking for the delights of the agricultural life. See, for example, Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, February 8, 1834, Correspondence, p. 332.

¹⁶⁵ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 85. Cf. Robert Penn Warren's account of the "grim accurate logic" in Calhoun's speech of March 4, 1850. Warren's summary of Calhoun's logic implies that the defense of slavery was basic in Calhoun's final statement of the South's case against the North. See Warren, John Brown, pp. 74-75.

this remark in a context which emphasizes that state rights or state sovereignty was meant to "protect things far more fundamental and larger than slave property."¹⁶⁶ Owsley further contends that "[a]n unmixed agrarian society such as Jefferson and Calhoun had in mind called for no positive program,"¹⁶⁷ such as the tariff or subsidies for internal improvements, which would benefit one section at the expense of another.¹⁶⁸

Owsley's image of Calhoun is attractive--but it is convincing only up to a certain point. Let us first admit the evidence which gives a certain credibility to Owsley's apparent belief that Calhoun's doctrine of state sovereignty was formulated with an eye to matters other than slavery. Perhaps the best evidence is found in his letters in 1827 and thereafter, which describe the tariff as oppressive to the South.¹⁶⁹ So too his casting the deciding vote against the tariff bill of 1827 and his preparing the "South Carolina Exposition" in 1828 suggest that his conversion from nationalist to defender of state sovereignty was associated with a perception that the tariff exploited the agrarian South. Some evidence, however, suggests that the

¹⁶⁶ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 87. Owsley does not consider it to the purpose to distinguish between state rights and state sovereignty here.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 88. Lytle, too, strongly implies that Calhoun was the representative of the "agrarian tradition" in politics. See Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 33; Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 210.

¹⁶⁸ Davidson alludes to Calhoun as defender of the South against economic exploitation in such passages as the following: Donald Davidson, "The Restoration of the Farmer," American Review, III (April, 1934), 99; Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 299.

¹⁶⁹ Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, August 26, 1827, Correspondence, pp. 250-251; Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, May 4, 1828, ibid., p. 265.

possibility of a Northern threat to slavery was at least present in his thinking during the years when his metamorphosis into defender of state sovereignty was being prepared. That he considered slavery an important part of the social order to be defended is suggested, first of all, by the fact that, according to John Quincy Adams' diary, Calhoun expressed as early as 1820 the idea that slavery was a good substratum upon which to rear free political institutions.¹⁷⁰ Second, the "South Carolina Exposition" itself--which, in apparent confirmation of Owsley's thesis, characterizes agriculture as the South's "ancient and favorite pursuit"--definitely mentions that not only the South's "soil, climate, [and] habits," but also its "peculiar labor,"¹⁷¹ are adapted to agriculture. Finally, in a letter written in September, 1830, Calhoun indicates that he is even more alarmed over the prospect of federal action against slavery than he is over other matters of taxation and disbursements--and furthermore that he considers slavery along with soil and climate (rather than any conscious preference of agricultural pursuits) to be the forces which make the South agricultural. "I consider the tariff but as the occasion rather than the real cause of the present unhappy state of things," Calhoun says; and he continues:

The truth can no longer be disguised that the peculiar domestic institution of the Southern States, and the consequent direction which that and her soil and climate have given to her industry, has placed them in regard to taxation and appropriations in opposite relations to the majority of the Union; against the danger of which, if there be no protective power in the reserved

¹⁷⁰ Entry of March 3, 1920, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, V, 10.

¹⁷¹ Calhoun, "South Carolina Exposition," Works, VI, 12.

rights of the states, they must in the end be forced to rebel, or submit to have their permanent interest sacrificed, their domestic institutions subverted by colonization and other schemes, and themselves and children reduced to wretchedness. Thus situated, the denial of the right of the state to interfere in the last resort more alarms the thinking than all other causes. 172

Even Owsley's own writings furnish evidence tending to undermine his implication that because Calhoun's doctrine of state sovereignty was formulated before Garrison and Co., Abolitionists, went into business, the original formulation of the doctrine must somehow not be tainted with a pro-slavery aroma. One of Owsley's own essays (published in 1938) states that the Northern attack on slavery began not with the abolition crusade of Garrison and Weld in the 1830's but with the agitation of the Missouri question in 1819--which was several years before Calhoun "evolved" his "extreme doctrine of state sovereignty." Owsley thus makes a statement which, taken with Calhoun's statements in 1820 and 1830, might suggest that Calhoun had reason prior to and during the Nullification controversy to be uneasy about the security of slavery. Owsley presents a lively picture of Northern anti-slavery venom in the period 1819-1821 and thereafter:

when Missouri applied for admission into the Union as a slave state, the Northeast, as if acting upon a preconcerted signal, poured the vials of its wrath upon slavery, the slaveholder, and upon the South as a section. Suddenly and seemingly out of a clear sky, the whole North condemned the whole South politically and morally [A]nger continued to smolder during the next ten years, though it did not

172 Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, September, 1830. Quoted from William M. Meigs, Life of John C. Calhoun (New York, 1917), I, 418-419, on p. 39 of Spain's Political Theory of John C. Calhoun.

blaze again until Garrison and Weld began the Abolition Crusade in 1831. 173

Calhoun was doubtless not unaware of this smoldering anger, although, according to some authorities, he "apparently depreciated the seriousness of the danger to slavery at the time."¹⁷⁴ According to Owsley, "[i]n the period between 1821 and 1831, . . . certain Southern intellectuals began laying the foundation of the defense mechanism which we call the philosophy of slavery." Owsley implies that Calhoun was unaware of this defense, prior to 1831 for he says that it did not "for the time being, at least," receive much notice. In 1831, "when Garrison and Weld began the thirty years' crusade against the South," says Owsley, "Chancellor Harper, Thomas R. Dew and John C. Calhoun found this material waiting for their hand."¹⁷⁵ Does Owsley wish us to believe that Calhoun became conscious of the pro-slavery argument only suddenly in 1831 when Garrison started the Liberator? This is hard to believe--especially when we have Calhoun's letter to Virgil Maxcy in 1830 expressing his fear that slavery was among the interests of the South which might be undermined by the federal government.

Owsley's statement that Calhoun envisaged an "unmixed agrarian society" which "called for no positive program" of

¹⁷³ Frank L. Owsley, "Jefferson Davis," Southern Review, III (Spring, 1938), 764.

¹⁷⁴ Spain, Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 17. Spain cites Meigs, Life of Calhoun, I, 320-343, as his authority.

¹⁷⁵ Owsley, "Jefferson Davis," Southern Review, III (Spring, 1938), 764-765. Cf. William S. Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 65, 72, 77, 79; and Arthur Y. Lloyd, The Slavery Controversy, 1831-1860 (Chapel Hill, 1939), p. vii.

national legislation¹⁷⁶ is less defensible than the implications of his remark on the doctrine of state sovereignty in relation to the slavery crusade. The evidence is perhaps indecisive on the latter question, but the attempt to present Calhoun as a pure agrarian opposed to national legislation for the benefit of a region is patently absurd. Calhoun has already (to use one reviewer's phrase) been "rescued from the clutches"¹⁷⁷ of the Agrarians by August O. Spain, who in his book The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun points out that "Calhoun in his attitude toward industrialism differed from the modern Southern agrarians in several important respects."¹⁷⁸ Spain cites Calhoun's concessions to the spirit of technology and industry. "I am no enemy to the manufacturing interest," Calhoun said in arguing against the tariff bill of 1842; and he further declared (in a passage which Spain quotes in part):

According to my conception, the great advance made in the arts by mechanical and chemical inventions and discoveries, in the last three or four generations, has done more for civilization, and the elevation of the human race, than all other causes combined in the same period. With this impression, I behold with pleasure the progress of the arts in every department, and look to them, mainly, as the great means of bringing about a higher state of civilization, with all the accompanying blessings, physical, political, and moral. It is not to them, nor to the manufacturing interest, I object; but to what I believe to be the unjust unconstitutional, the mistaken and pernicious

¹⁷⁶ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 88.

¹⁷⁷ J. C. Cairns [Review of The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, by August O. Spain], Saturday Review, XXXV (February 23, 1952), 43.

¹⁷⁸ Spain, Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 270-273. I have pointed out in footnotes the respects in which I agree or disagree with Spain's brief and stimulating analysis.

means of bettering their condition by what is called the protective system.¹⁷⁹

Sound as Spain's perception on the matter of Calhoun's attitude toward technology and manufacturing is, he nevertheless does not give the piece of evidence which blatantly demonstrates that Calhoun (despite his attacks on the tariff) was willing to use the federal machinery to help the South apply technology to economic progress. This piece of evidence is Calhoun's statement in 1845 at the Memphis Convention and in a later report on the Convention that he had never hesitated to vote in favor of the federal government's "granting alternate sections to railroads or canals"¹⁸⁰ and that he was prepared to ask similar aid for "projected railroads between the valley of the Mississippi and the southern Atlantic ports."¹⁸¹ Calhoun maintained, to be sure, that such aid would "do but little" toward the construction of these particular railroads since they would "pass through comparatively but a small portion of public lands, and that a remnant which has been long in market, and has remained unsold,

¹⁷⁹ Calhoun, "Speech on the Passage of the Tariff Bill, delivered in the Senate, August 5, 1842," Works, IV, 183-184. Quoted in part in Spain, Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 272. Contrast Calhoun's remarks, here, on the relation of the "arts" (i.e. technology) to progress with Poe's statements on the same subject. See footnote on p. 178 of this dissertation.

¹⁸⁰ Calhoun, "Address on taking the chair of the Southwestern Convention, Memphis, November 13, 1845," Works, VI, 281. In an obvious attempt to enlist the aid of the Northwest, Calhoun recalled that he had given the "casting vote in favor of an act granting alternate sections to the canal intended to connect Lake Michigan with the Mississippi through the Illinois River." Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Calhoun, "Report on the Memphis Memorial, submitted to the Senate, June 26, 1846," Works, V, 290. Calhoun also recommended that the duty on iron be removed or reduced so as to make the building of railroads cheaper. And he thought the Mississippi River might be improved by the federal government on the grounds that it was, in effect, an "inland sea." Ibid., pp. 291, 269ff.

because of a very inferior quality." But we should note carefully his statement of principles, which has transcontinental implications. His committee was, he said, "of the opinion, not only that Congress has the right to contribute to the extent stated, in such cases, but that it is duty bound to do so, as the representative of a part of the proprietors of the land to be benefited."¹⁸² Here surely is a "positive program" of aid, justified in the abstract. In his address to the commercial convention at Memphis, Calhoun specifically envisaged an extension, by similar means, of railroads west of the Mississippi.¹⁸³ May we not ask whether Calhoun's prophetic powers were, in this instance, focused on hopes for a rosy Southern future rather than on prospects of national doom? It should not be forgotten that Calhoun's Memphis proposals climaxed a decade of busy attempts to find ways of financing railroads.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 290.

¹⁸³ Calhoun, "Address on taking the chair of the Southwestern Convention, Memphis, November 13, 1845," Works, VI, 278.

¹⁸⁴ For more details on Calhoun's willingness to have public moneys used to finance railroads which were to be privately operated, see, for example, his letter to William C. Dawson in 1835 expressing his hope that funds from the federal surplus might be distributed to the states and that Georgia and South Carolina would use their shares in "subscribing into incorporated Companies and selling out when the work is completed, and reinvesting in others" so as to provide a "judicious system of rail roads [sic]." Calhoun, Correspondence, pp. 350, 349. See also other letters showing that, although Calhoun was not out for personal aggrandizement and although he wanted a real railroad and not merely a stock-jobbing fiasco, he was quite eager for the states to facilitate by liberal charters and other means the building of railroads by "a few . . . strong capitalists, at the head of a small but well selected company." Calhoun to F. Carter, November 26, 1835, ibid., pp. 353-355; Calhoun to A. S. Clayton, November 24, 1835, ibid., p. 352; Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, November 11, 1836, ibid., pp. 364-365; Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, December 9, 1836, ibid., pp. 365-367.

Owsley complains that the national government has listened all too tenderly to the "eternal whine of the big business for paternalistic and exploitative legislation such as the tariff, the ship and railroad subsidies."¹⁸⁵ If Owsley honestly faced the implications of Calhoun's recommendations in regard to railroads, would he not have to admit that Calhoun was among the early statesmen who waved the bone that prompted railroad promoters to learn to whine? To change the metaphor, may we not suspect that Calhoun himself in his role of railroad promoter wished to use the State "as an engine to serve a purpose"¹⁸⁶--the purpose being flourishing commerce for the South? Has Tate (like Owsley) the "ironic distinction [not] . . . to have seen" that Calhoun was capable of making government and men "instrumental to the superior ends of commerce and trade"?¹⁸⁷ To press our point, are we entitled to ask whether the historic Calhoun actually helped to prepare the doom which Tate would like to think Calhoun merely foresaw and wished to avert?

Defense of White Agricultural Interests and White Supremacy

Perhaps the frankest reflection of Calhoun's aims in seeking political power for the South is found in Donald Davidson's essay "Federation or Disunion: The Political Economy of Regionalism."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 86.

¹⁸⁶ The phrase is from Spengler's Decline, II, 404. It resembles Tate's characterization of the Northern materialistic attitude toward government. Tate pictures Calhoun's and Rhett's attitude as antithetical to that of the North. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 14.

¹⁸⁷ I have applied to Calhoun Tate's phrasing in reference to Rhett's view of the North. See ibid.

¹⁸⁸ The Attack on Leviathan, pp. 102-128.

Davidson has declared that "where the political rôle of the South was concerned," the Agrarians (in I'll Take My Stand) "followed Calhoun, for it was the obvious if regrettable duty of the South to continue to defend itself against an aggressive, exploiting North."¹⁸⁹ Davidson translates Calhoun's polity into twentieth-century terms. According to Davidson, regional imperialism--that is, the technique by which the section which can rally a majority vote seizes the national government and uses it to plunder the other sections--is "what Calhoun called the tyranny of the majority."¹⁹⁰ It follows, according to Davidson, that measures must be taken to safeguard the regions in their "economic pursuits" and in their "cultural and social institutions."¹⁹¹ "Regional rights" replaces "state rights" or "state sovereignty" as a slogan, but some of the things which the region may be expected to protect correspond to the things Calhoun intended his doctrine to protect. Insofar as Davidson, following Owsley,¹⁹² wishes to give each region a concurrent voice in the making of tariffs,¹⁹³ Davidson follows the Calhoun who was, after 1827, faithful in this matter to important white agricultural

¹⁸⁹ Davidson, "'I'll Take My Stand': A History," American Review, V (Summer, 1935), 312.

¹⁹⁰ Davidson, "Federation or Disunion: The Political Economy of Regionalism," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 117.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 124. Cf. Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," American Review, IV (March, 1935), 544-545.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Davidson, "Federation or Disunion: The Political Economy of Regionalism," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 117.

interests of the South. Davidson's suggestions that perhaps the regions should be given some control over credit and money¹⁹⁴ also probably owes something to Calhoun's remarks on the money power.¹⁹⁵ There can be no doubt that Davidson has understood the usefulness of Calhoun's doctrine of state rights or state sovereignty in enabling the white race to rule the black in the South. He suggests that perhaps the South should be given power "to preserve its bi-racial social system without the furtive evasion or raw violence to which it is now driven when sniped at with weapons of federal legality."¹⁹⁶ (Generously, he suggests that the Far West and the Southwest be given "power . . . to do likewise with their own race problems.")¹⁹⁷ Five paragraphs later, Davidson quite forgets, or ignores, the fact that one of the purposes behind his slogan "regional rights" is the keeping in subjection of between 14% and 49% of the population of each

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁹⁵ Note, for example, the sectional character of Calhoun's warning against the kind of bank which might be set up if Harrison were elected in 1840: "it would be better for the South to have a monarch at once, than a \$50,000,000 bank located in Philadelphia or New York. It would be to create a master, under existing circumstances--a master without interest in us, or regard, or sympathy for us, and which would look to use us exclusively as a subject of plunder." Calhoun to Armistead Burt, November 2, 1840, Correspondence, p. 466.

¹⁹⁶ Davidson, "Federation or Disunion: The Political Economy of Regionalism," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 126.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Davidson is following the spirit of Calhoun's protests against abolition propaganda when he says that regions should be given "power to safeguard educational systems against . . . propaganda aimed at the very life of regional cultures," though he doubtless has other aspects of regional culture, in addition to the racial aspect, in mind. Ibid.

of the Southern states. Like Calhoun, he forgets that Negroes are people when he righteously takes up the theme of regional sovereignty (in a spiritual if not a constitutional sense): "If a given region is too hard pressed, if it is denied recourse, if it is irritated by an assumption of superior piety," Davidson warns, "then regionalists will think of the old watchword, independence." And what does "independence" mean? "Among other things, it means," says Davidson, "that the land and the region belong to the people who dwell there, and that they will be governed only by their own consent."¹⁹⁸ On this threat of secession from Davidson, the following question is perhaps an appropriate comment: Are the Negroes who dwell in the region people? In his enthusiasm for state rights or regional rights, Davidson exhibits perfectly, in his own person, the contradiction which we find in Calhoun--a contradiction to which none of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists calls attention (though they sometimes unconsciously exhibit the same contradiction in their own thinking). On the one hand, Davidson shares Calhoun's realistic perception that governments must be held in check by the governed since even elected legislators and executives--like all human beings--feel their own interests more strongly than they do those of other people; on the other hand, Davidson assumes that those elements in society who happen to be at the bottom of the social and economic scale--that is, in the South, the Negroes--need not be given civil means of resisting or influencing the operation

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

of the government.¹⁹⁹ On this obvious contradiction the pleas of Calhoun and Davidson for more local self-government founder.

Advocacy of the Doctrine of the Concurrent Majority

Our final concern is Tate's and Lytle's estimate of Calhoun's doctrine of the concurrent majority. This question is important because this doctrine is often cited as a permanent contribution to the technique of protecting minorities in a democracy.

Lytle supplies a colorful record of Calhoun's image of the American people living under the rule of the numerical majority rather than under a government built on the principle of the concurrent majority. The implication of Lytle's argument is that majority rule is almost by definition totalitarianism. Calhoun's term for "totalitarianism, or Babylon," says Lytle (in an article which finds symbolic connections between agrarian thought and the nursery rhyme "How Many Miles to Babylon"), was "the Rule of the Numerical Majority: that amorphous majority controlled by the small irresponsible minority, which in turn responds to variable pressure, and all [sic] deluded by the fiction of representation."²⁰⁰ Lytle implies that the

¹⁹⁹ See, for example, Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 408, where Davidson grimly declares that the Negro will "not achieve the ballot as a general thing at any early date" in the South. Even those who would say that the ballot is not the Negro's first need may be depressed by Davidson's refusing to encourage even the agrarian panacea--land ownership--for Negroes where it would imply "disturbance of the time-honored economic arrangements and social conventions which have resulted from the gradual adjustment of both races to the artificial, difficult, post-Civil War situation." Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 202.

²⁰⁰ Lytle, "How Many Miles to Babylon," Hopkins Review, VI (Spring-Summer, 1953), 102.

theory and practice of majority rule through representative government is always vicious, for (says Lytle), as Calhoun said, the "numerical majority is always controlled by an active, self-interested minority." And Lytle predicts totalitarianism as the inevitable outcome of majority rule. In grim and knowing accents, Lytle warns: "I believe it was pointed out [presumably by Calhoun] that this majority, dispossessed of property (ownership with control) but left with the vote, must institute a servile state."²⁰¹

Tate's praise for the doctrine of the concurrent majority is enthusiastic. That the Democratic Party under Calhoun "lost its democracy in the defense of slavery," Tate concedes to Herbert Agar, whose book The Pursuit of Happiness he reviewed in 1938. But, Tate contends, Calhoun really had a fine political theory anyway: Calhoun's "theory of democratic action"--the principle of the concurrent majority--might be useful today, Tate insists. It would

protect the minority economic interests, whether national or sectional, from being crushed by those interests that can muster the largest popular vote. This means, of course, that a strong minority interest can dominate the country through a debased suffrage. Calhoun's system, then, would protect the people from menace in two directions--the tyranny of numerical majorities and the control of majorities by entrenched minorities like our monopoly capitalists of today. ²⁰²

Calhoun's system, in other words, would save us from "mass democracy" in which the masses force their will on various minorities; at the

²⁰¹ Lytle, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, II (Summer, 1952), 30. The context of Lytle's remark indicates that he is paraphrasing Calhoun in this sentence. But the language sounds more like Hilaire Belloc's than Calhoun's.

²⁰² Tate, [Review of The Pursuit of Happiness, by Herbert Agar], Free America, II (October, 1938), 17.

same time, it would protect the masses from being duped by a clever minority which makes them its instrument in controlling the nation. So Tate maintains.

The question which we would like to ask of both Mr. Tate and Mr. Calhoun is what they mean by the term "interests." It seems clear that Calhoun, at least, did not mean to have American society polled by classes marked off along horizontal lines. Although he presents an example of a past government (Rome) in which representation was by classes--patricians and plebeians--both of which had a negative voice on governmental policies,²⁰³ he is careful to say that in the United States, since there are no classes, the geographical divisions (the states) constitute the separate interests whose concurrence in federal policies ought to be secured.²⁰⁴ Although Calhoun says that each "interest" will be composed of people all of whom will be similarly affected by the government's action,²⁰⁵ he appears to assume that in the South within a given occupation (such as cotton culture) all men (from cotton-picking slave to plantation owner) stand to benefit or

²⁰³Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 92ff.

²⁰⁴Calhoun, "Address on the Relation which the States and General Government bear to each other," Works, VI, 65. Lytle's exposition of Calhoun's theory of the concurrent majority accepts Calhoun's designation of the separate states as the "sovereigns" whose concurrence should be secured before federal policy affecting them was enacted. See Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 529-530. Amusingly enough, Tate and Lytle, doubtless taking their cue from Frank L. Owsley's State Rights and the Confederacy (Chicago, 1925), pp. 1-2, have implied that too rigorous devotion to the doctrine of state rights weakened the Confederacy. See Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 528; Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 235, 239.

²⁰⁵Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 27.

suffer alike from a given piece of legislation.²⁰⁶ In view of Tate's own statements in Jefferson Davis that the issue in the late sectional struggle was "class rule and religion versus democracy and science"²⁰⁷ and that Calhoun understood the meaning of that struggle²⁰⁸ and in view of Lytle's statement that the "planting aristocracy was determined to make itself responsible for the South,"²⁰⁹ what is to prevent us from asking whether Calhoun's "theory of democratic action" (as Tate calls the doctrine of the concurrent majority) was not intended by Calhoun as a particularly refined means by which the rich or well-born of each geographical area or each kind of economic enterprise (e.g., cotton culture) might establish political hegemony over the majority in their area or enterprise?

The problem which Calhoun's doctrine of the concurrent

²⁰⁶ In the slaveholding states, according to Calhoun, "labor and capital are identified. There the high profit of labor but increases the means of the master to add to the comfort of his slaves." Calhoun, "Remarks in reply to Mr. Simmons, on his Resolutions; made in the Senate, February 20, 1847," Works, IV, 361. That Calhoun assumes the slaves to be virtually represented in government in that their interest is identical with that of their owners is indicated by the following statement: "Every plantation is a little community, with the master at its head, who concentrates in himself the united interests of capital and labor, of which he is the common representative. These small communities aggregated make the State in all, [sic] whose action, labor, [sic] and capital is equally represented and perfectly harmonized." Calhoun, "Remarks . . . on . . . the Rights of the States and the Abolition of Slavery, December 27, 1837, et seq.," Works, III, 180. The punctuation of this passage is obviously faulty. It should read "in all whose action, labor and capital is equally represented and perfectly harmonized."

²⁰⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 87.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

²⁰⁹ Andrew N. Lytle, "The Irrepressible Conflict," American Review, V (May, 1935), 253.

majority (with its sketch of an "organism" taking the sense of the separate "interests" in society) leaves unsolved is, then, the following: what is to prevent the strongest minority in a given regional-occupational group from controlling for its own ends the majority in its area? Tate does not face this question squarely when he celebrates Calhoun's "theory of democratic action." Is some magic formula or circumstance supposed to turn all members of the upper classes into guardian angels at the moment when the principle of the concurrent majority is incorporated into the government? Would Tate agree with the optimistic "yes" which is the answer of Russell Kirk, sympathetic interpreter of Calhoun? Commenting on Calhoun's remark that the suffrage may be more widely extended in a country governed on the principles of the concurrent majority,²¹⁰ Kirk concludes that

Where the theory of the concurrent majority prevails, the rich and the poor will not huddle in opposing camps, but will rank together under the respective banners of their sections and interests; the class struggle will be moderated by establishing a community of advantage. ²¹¹

Calhoun himself phrases his Utopian vision of a society governed on the principle of the concurrent majority in the following terms:

[I]n government of the concurrent majority, . . . the wealthy and intelligent being identified in interest with the poor and ignorant of their respective portions or interests of the community, become their leaders and protectors. And hence,

²¹⁰ Calhoun, Works, I, 45-46.

²¹¹ Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana (Chicago, 1953), p. 134.

as the latter would have neither hope nor inducement to rally the former in order to obtain the control, the right of suffrage, under such a government, may be safely enlarged . . . without incurring the hazard to which such enlargement would expose government of the numerical majority.²¹²

May we not note, with justifiable distrust of Calhoun the political thinker, the fact that Calhoun's facile assumption of the identity of interest between slaveowner and slave²¹³ resembles his equally facile assumption of the identity of interest between rich and poor in each portion of the community under the system of government by concurrent majority?

VI. CONCLUSION

An examination of the Calhoun portraits in the Vanderbilt Traditionalist gallery has revealed most of these portraits to be highly idealized. Calhoun is equated by Tate and Lytle with the responsible paternalism of an agricultural society's ruling class--a paternalism apparently so benevolent that, for some viewers (though not for the liberal), it may make slavery seem tolerable and the philosophy underlying slavery almost ingratiating. As painters of Calhoun, Tate, Lytle, and Owsley, in particular, are sometimes quite impressionistic in their technique. In general, they obscure beneath a softening haze of generalities any resemblance between the historic Calhoun and the modern captain of industry.

²¹² Calhoun, "Disquisition," Works, I, 46.

²¹³ See footnote 206 on p. 249 of this dissertation.

The attachment of some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists to Calhoun lends a rich ambiguity, to say the least, to their implications that they are averse to the development of a "servile state."²¹⁴ Tate, it will be recalled, has singled out for praise Hilaire Belloc's The Servile State²¹⁵--a book claiming that the drift of modern society is toward an economic structure which will in effect re-establish slavery for the masses--slavery such as (Belloc emphasizes) was universally accepted in pre-Christian Europe.²¹⁶ A deep contradiction within Tate's scheme of values makes him defend the Old Southerner who provided a rationale for the very kind of society which even the conservative Belloc identifies with pre-Christian and post-Christian eras. It may be supposed that Tate has not read what the Distributist Cecil E. Chesterton (friend of Hilaire Belloc) had to say about Calhoun. Chesterton declared that Calhoun was an advocate of the servile state. According to Chesterton, "Calhoun's case was as strong for white servitude as for black: it was a defence, not especially of Negro Slavery, but of what Mr. Belloc has called 'the Servile State.'"²¹⁷ Of Calhoun's "great pro-Slavery speeches"

²¹⁴ Passages in which various Vanderbilt Traditionalists imply their dislike of what they would call a "servile state" are cited on pp. 71n, 89, 144n, 179n, and 248 of this dissertation.

²¹⁵ Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 6.

²¹⁶ See Chapter II of this dissertation for comment on Belloc's The Servile State.

²¹⁷ Cecil E. Chesterton, A History of the United States (London, 1919), p. 134.

Chesterton (admitting Calhoun's sincerity and intellectual power) declared: "They serve to show how strong a case an able advocate can make out for the old pre-Christian basis of European society [i.e., slavery]; and they will have a peculiar interest if ever, as seems not improbable, the industrial part of Northern Europe reverts to that basis."²¹⁸ Will Mr. Tate's pro-Calhoun speeches, we may inquire, have a peculiar interest if American or European society reverts to a society of fixed classes? And should not Tate's and some other Vanderbilt Traditionalists' eulogies of Calhoun be of peculiar interest at this present moment to those who may desire to rationalize with a complex myth the continued subordination of the Negro as a race?

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 111.

CHAPTER V
THE PROMISED LAND

Floating

Hating king and monk,
The classes and the mass
We chartered an old junk

(Like Jesus on his ass)
Unto the smutty corn
And smirking sassafras.

Allen Tate, "False Nightmare,"
Poems: 1922-1947, p. 57.

The South was the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere, a conservative check upon the restless expansiveness of the industrial North. . . . The South was permanently old-fashioned, backward-looking, slow, contented to live upon a modest conquest of nature, unwilling to conquer the earth's resources for the fun of the conquest; contented, in short, to take only what man needs; unwilling to juggle the needs of man in the illusory pursuit of abstract wealth.

Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

He did so well with cotton that he raised a thousand bales in 1861 at a profit of thirty thousand dollars. The wandering of the Forrests had at last come to an end. Bedford had established himself as one of the rich men of a feudal culture, fast becoming static. The Wilderness had been reduced to a planting and farming country, and the Great Road . . . was now come to its end. But before Bedford and the people like him could settle down and begin to live on the land, they would have to fight a more strenuous enemy than the Wilderness.

Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 28.

I. A BACKWARD GLANCE AND A PREVIEW OF "THE PROMISED LAND"

In Chapters III and IV, we have been chiefly concerned with Tate's and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists' versions of Old Southern social ideas--especially as they see those ideas incarnated in Jefferson and Calhoun (and their "lieutenants," John Taylor and Robert Barnwell Rhett). Primarily, we have been preoccupied with the supposed ideals of Jefferson and Calhoun--that is, with the direction which (according to the Vanderbilt Traditionalists) these two Old Southerners hoped Southern society would take. Our principal questions have been the following: How accurate and how complete are the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' reports on Jeffersonian liberalism and Calhounian conservatism? And what is the significance of the Vanderbilt writers' attraction to or modification, suppression, and criticism of various elements in these two bodies of Old Southern thought?

In Chapter V--"The Promised Land"--we shall be chiefly concerned with Tate's and Andrew N. Lytle's reports on what they conceive to have been some of the actualities of Old Southern society as it moved westward in the late eighteenth century and, more particularly, the nineteenth century--and with their implications as to its future course if it had not

been violently upset by the Civil War and Reconstruction. In part, their attitudes have already been stated in Chapters III and IV. But further dimensions of their views on the Southern feudalism, as well as certain views of other Vanderbilt Traditionalists, remain to be investigated. The following topics and questions will be discussed in this chapter: (1) Towards Democracy or towards Aristocracy?--What are the major differences and similarities between what Tate says and what Frank L. Owsley says about the relative importance of aristocracy and plain folk in the late antebellum South? (2) The Man of Letters, the Negro Slave, and the Aristocracy--What are the limits of the criticism which Tate makes of Negro slavery and the aristocracy in connection with his attempts to account for the Old South's attitude toward the man of letters? (3) The Meaning of the West--How coherent are Tate's and Lytle's reports on the rise of Old Southwestern society in the last half of the eighteenth century and the first sixty years of the nineteenth century? What are the usual limits of Tate's and Lytle's willingness to criticize the acquisitiveness which to the liberal would seem to be implicit in the Old Southern plantation system? (4) Defenders of the Southern Feudalism--How are Tate's and Lytle's portraits of the defenders of the Southern feudalism--Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Bedford Forrest--related to Tate's and Lytle's images of class and race in the Old South? (5) Remains of the Seaboard Gentry--To what extent does Tate's novel The Fathers constitute a eulogy and to what extent a critique

of Old Southern slaveowning gentlemen? (6) The External Challenge: Abolitionism--To what extent do the attitudes of Tate and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists toward Abolitionism--the chief external threat to the Southern social order prior to the Civil War--constitute a rationalization, implicit or explicit, of the South's persistence in its discriminatory bi-racial system both before the Civil War and in the twentieth century?

II. TOWARDS DEMOCRACY OR TOWARDS ARISTOCRACY ?

A dramatic introduction to significant similarities and differences between Tate and Owsley may be found in Donald Davidson's attempts to generalize about his own and other Vanderbilt Agrarians' emphasis in accounts of planter and plain folk in the ante-bellum South. Davidson has made strenuous efforts to clear the Vanderbilt Agrarians of the charge that they have given an inordinately large amount of their attention to the slaveowning planter. At times his sensitivity to the charge leads him to elaborate the obvious point that the Old South contained a healthy body of yeomen farmers as well as a planter aristocracy and to link with that point the less respectable assertion that there was in the Old South a "balance" or "equilibrium" of democracy and aristocracy, of free and slave labor. (This latter assertion, incidentally, suggests his complacent approval of the slaveowning planter, on the implied grounds that the slaveholding planter did not prevent

the flourishing of the small farmer and that there were no more slaves than were necessary to the maintenance of social "balance.")¹ In an essay published in 1939, Davidson undertakes to summarize the general picture which the Agrarians gave of the Southern social structure, ante-bellum and twentieth-century. Reacting against the charge that the Agrarians "envisioned 'a charming agrarian past of the golden age,'" Davidson declares that the authors of I'll Take My Stand knew very well that the "South of past and present" had been a "mingling of plantation, farm, and frontier, with both the imperfections and bounties that such a mixture implies."²

¹ For example, in 1930, Davidson wrote of the Old South: "There was . . . a fair balance of aristocratic and democratic elements. Plantation affected frontier; frontier affected plantation. The balance might be illustrated by pairings; it was no purely aristocratic or purely democratic South that produced Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, John C. Calhoun and Andrew Johnson, Poe and Simms." See Donald Davidson, "A Mirror for Artists," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 53.

In another essay, Davidson pictures the social structure both in the Old Southeast and the Old Southwest as a well-balanced combination of various elements. In terms that, incidentally, confound Jeffersonianism, agrarian culture, and slavery, Davidson describes the society of the Old Southwest as a "western transplantation of the political economy of Jefferson and the agrarian culture of the Old Southeast: that is, it included yeoman farmer, planter, and Negro slave, repeating in outlines sometimes cruder, sometimes bolder and more magnificent, the mixture of democracy and homespun aristocracy, of free labor and slave labor, that marked the equilibrium of the social structure from the Potomac to Charleston." See Davidson, "The Two Old Wests," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 170.

² Davidson, "The Class Approach to Southern Problems," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 264, 265. The phrase "a charming agrarian past of the golden age" is Davidson's echo of the description which he evidently thought C. Vann Woodward gave of the Vanderbilt Agrarians' picture of the Old South. Actually, Woodward did not attribute such a picture specifically to the writings of the Agrarians. See C. Vann Woodward, "Hillbilly Realism" [review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules, by Herman C. Nixon], Southern Review, IV (Spring, 1939), 680.

The "agrarians of 1930," Davidson insists, "put the emphasis . . . on the farm rather than the plantation; on the real plantation rather than its fictionized image; on democracy rather than aristocracy; on the little rather than the big fellow (and without shirking that hardest of problems, the Negro)."³

The first, third, and fourth parts of Davidson's statement are flatly untrue if applied to the contributions of John Donald Wade, John Gould Fletcher, and Stark Young to I'll Take My Stand. In his essay in I'll Take My Stand Wade eulogizes the son of a slaveowner--a slaveowner who had migrated from South Carolina to Georgia, where land (he was told) "was cheap and fresh, and where with thrift one might reasonably hope to set up for oneself almost a little nation of one's own."⁴

Fletcher, as we have already seen, rails against the plague of universal public education which took possession of this country after the defeat of the Old South.⁵ Young celebrates the landed slaveowning class and specifically states that it was they, and not the "people who worked their own farms with their own hands," who gave the Southern civilization its

³ Davidson, "The Class Approach to Southern Problems," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 265. We have already observed some of the ways in which Davidson deals with "that hardest of problems, the Negro." See pp. 142n, 224-226, 231, 245, and 247n of this dissertation.

⁴ John Donald Wade, "The Life and Death of Cousin Lucius," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 266.

⁵ Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 92-121.

"peculiar stamp." In speaking of traditional Southern characteristics, Young makes it clear that he refers largely to a life "founded on land and the ownership of slaves."⁶

If we focus our attention upon Wade, Fletcher, and Young, we may wonder how Davidson can have the effrontery to maintain that the Agrarians of I'll Take My Stand put the emphasis on the farm, democracy and the little fellow.⁷ Davidson must sense the precariousness of his position, particularly so far as Stark Young is concerned: apparently in an effort to free the Agrarian group of any onus that might adhere to them on account of Stark Young's exclusive celebration of the slave-owning aristocracy, Davidson implies that Young's social views are quite different from those of other Agrarians. The symposium I'll Take My Stand, Davidson says (as if in qualification of his claims as to the "emphasis" of the Agrarians) included views as diverse as those of Andrew N. Lytle and Stark Young. Actually, there is less "discrepancy" between Young's views and Lytle's views (as expressed in I'll Take My Stand) than Davidson would imply.⁸ Although Lytle describes in lyrical detail a

⁶ Young, "Not in Memoriam, but in Defense," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 336, 337. Italics mine.

⁷ Davidson, "The Class Approach to Southern Problems," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 265.

⁸ Ibid., p. 264. Note that Davidson's avowed "emphasis" on the farmer does not prevent him from writing a highly laudatory study of Stark Young's novel So Red the Rose--a novel which lovingly idealizes the planter. See Donald Davidson, "Theme and Method in 'So Red the Rose,'" Hopkins Review, VI (Spring-Summer, 1953), 85-100.

present-day Tennessee farmer such as might be descended from a farmer of the Old South,⁹ he says that the planters were the ruling class even in the late ante-bellum South.¹⁰ Furthermore, Lytle does not deplore that fact; on the contrary, he regrets that the ruling planter class was destroyed.¹¹

Even more amusing than the discrepancy between Davidson's claims and the specific views of such Agrarians as Lytle and Young is the discrepancy between some of Davidson's own views. There is, of course, an especially rich irony in the fact that Davidson himself has more than once¹² taken up his pen in defense of the plantation economy in certain areas of the present-day South. In 1935, Davidson publicly gnashed his teeth over the alien textbooks which the twentieth-century college freshman in Georgia was using. Did Davidson, we may ask, recommend the substitution of textbooks which would give a sympathetic history of the small farmer in Georgia? Not in the least! Rather, he yearned for books which would let the

⁹ Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 216-234. Of his imaginary farmer, Lytle says: "His grandfather belonged to that large number of sturdy freemen who owned from three to five hundred acres of land and perhaps a slave or two in better days. But owning a few slaves did not make him a planter. He and his sons worked alongside them in the fields. Of farmers so situated in the South there was one to every twelve and one-tenth of free population." Ibid., p. 218.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 209-210.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 210.

¹² See pp. 324-326 and p. 263 of this dissertation. See also Davidson, "Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 176-204.

Georgia freshman "get some respect and understanding for the plantation culture of which he is a rooted part."¹³ Apparently this was Davidson's way of "put[ting] the emphasis . . . on democracy rather than aristocracy" and "on the little rather than the big fellow."¹⁴

The inaccuracy of Davidson's generalizations as to the Agrarians' "emphasis" on democracy rather than aristocracy focuses for us a major question upon which there has apparently been some difference among the Vanderbilt Agrarians. This question is the following: Were the planters the real rulers in the Old South? Tate and Owsley sometime seem to contradict each other in their answers to this question--or, at least, they differ as to strategy in discussing the matter. Lytle, as we shall see, seems on the whole to agree with Tate. Davidson is inclined, on some occasions, to agree with Owsley. As will shortly be shown, the Promised Land advertised by the Owsley of recent years as the land which the Old South had already entered before the Civil War was a land in which the yeoman farmer was "dominant" and in which the planter was an increasingly subordinate figure. Tate and Lytle, in contrast to Owsley, picture the planters as the ruling class, even in the late ante-bellum South.

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Davidson, "Regionalism and Education," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 254. The essay also appeared in the American Review, IV (January, 1935).

14

Davidson, "The Class Approach to Southern Problems," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 265.

As we have already noted,¹⁵ Tate has been remarking periodically since 1925¹⁶ that the Old South had "aristocratic rule."¹⁷ In Jefferson Davis, published in 1929, he observed that the Old South after 1830 "had steadily drawn away from democracy to class rule."¹⁸ In 1935, Tate's opinion was apparently unchanged, for he became even more specific: the "planter class," he said, "was about one fifth of the population; but the majority followed its lead."¹⁹ Also in 1935--not long before the publication of the avowedly Jeffersonian symposium entitled Who Owns America? (edited by Tate and Herbert Agar)--Andrew N. Lytle (who had written earlier that the planting class emerged as rulers in the newer sections of the South between 1830 and 1860)²⁰ justified the pro-slavery argument as an intellectual defense with which the planters could protect their rule: "The planting aristocracy was determined to make itself responsible for the South; this intention was consciously put in the pro-slavery argument, a manifesto discarding openly

¹⁵ See pp. 23 and 173-174 of this dissertation.

¹⁶ See Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485.

¹⁷ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 267.

¹⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 24.

¹⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 267.

²⁰ Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 209.

the democracy of Jefferson and Jackson," Lytle complacently announced.²¹ In an earlier article, also, when he wished to contrast the responsible reign of the planting aristocracy with the irresponsible reign of the twentieth-century industrial and financial plutocracy, Lytle represented the planters' political power as being quite an impressive, even a determining, influence in the Old South. In such a statement as the following on the late ante-bellum society of Robert Barnwell Rhett and Edmund Ruffin, Lytle took it for granted that the South was ruled by planters: "Their [i.e., the Southern radicals like Ruffin and Rhett] agrarian culture . . . produced in its planter rulers a class of men who understood their polity and the dangers which threatened its safety, and this cannot be said of industrial masters,"²² Lytle declared--and incidentally revealed that, in spite of his oft-reiterated tributes to the yeomanry,²³ he scarcely conceived of the Old South as having been ruled by the yeoman class.

21

Lytle, "The Irrepressible Conflict," American Review, V (May, 1935), 253. Elsewhere Lytle differentiates between the ideals of Jefferson and Jackson and denies that "Jacksonian Democracy" was "Democracy." See p. 340 of this dissertation. See also Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 209.

22

Lytle, "Principles of Secession," Hound and Horn, V (July-September, 1932), 693. For a similar statement, implying that the country gentleman was a responsible ruler of his culture, see Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, III (September, 1934), 435.

23

See, for example, Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 208, 210.

In contrast to Tate and Lytle, Owsley in his recent Plain Folk of the Old South attempts to discredit the view that the "planter class as such dominate[d] politics and determine[d] the policy of the government to the extent that has been usually claimed."²⁴ Owsley explains that certain modes of influencing the results of an election were probably not present to any significant extent in the Old South. Intimidation ("through threat of physical violence to the voter or his family") was of course not used in the Old South, Owsley convincingly maintains. Nor was it possible, he adds, for the aristocracy in the Old South to use "economic coercion" as a means of controlling the vote, "since the farmer usually owned his farm and was dependent on no one." Furthermore, he says, "(a)lthough there must have been in every community individuals whose vote could be purchased, there is no evidence of widespread use of bribery to sway the vote of the people." Owsley concludes that "whatever influence the planters exercised over the political action of the common people was of a personal and local nature." Such influence, says Owsley, "was based upon the respect the plain folk of a community had for the character and judgment of individual planters in that community and such qualities of character and judgment in the planter were revealed

²⁴ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 138. Somewhat ironic, in view of Owsley's recent claims as to the great importance of the yeoman subsistence farmer in the Old South, is the fact that Owsley's own massive study of Confederate diplomacy demonstrates the hold which commercial agriculture--specifically the cotton crop--had upon the minds of Southerners in the crisis of Civil War. See Frank L. Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America (Chicago, 1931).

only by his genuine participation in community affairs."²⁵ Pointing out that there were "few genuine planters outside the black belt" and that "such influence and leadership was relatively narrow," Owsley ends up by implying (though not stating flatly and unequivocally) that perhaps the planters were a rather insignificant influence on Southern politics in the late ante-bellum South: "If the farmers who lived outside the black belt were to be brought to support the interest of the planters," he suggests, "a less personal means of gaining their votes would have to be used; and this method had to be that of persuasion. Such persuasion," Owsley continues, "was then as now the chief business of the politicians; and unless the politicians were planters--and most, except on the national scale, were not--it would immediately become very much of a question as to whose interest was being served, whether that of the planters, or of the plain folk, or of the politicians and their political organizations."²⁶

²⁵ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, pp. 138-139.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 139-140. Avery Craven goes even further than Owsley in minimizing the role of the planter in late ante-bellum politics. According to Craven only a small percentage of the Southern Congressmen were of the planter class in the period from 1850 to 1860. Says Craven: "A careful study of biographical materials and facts revealed in the manuscript census shows that only some 7.73 per cent of the men who represented Virginia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and Tennessee in the House and Senate from 1850 to 1860 were plantation owners or had come from families of plantation owners. Most of them were lawyers, 75 per cent of whom had read law but had not attended law school." Avery O. Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism: 1848-1861 ([Baton Rouge], 1953), p. 163. If these lawyers tended to support the pro-slavery ideology, despite the fact that they were not planters, one explanation may lie in the fact that a large proportion of their income as lawyers had doubtless been derived from "services for the slavocracy." Clement Eaton notes that a "large proportion of the income of the professional class [in the Old South] was derived from services for the slavocracy." Clement Eaton, A History of the Old South (New York, 1949), p. 467.

Owsley goes on to emphasize the extension of the machinery of political democracy and the success of the Democratic Party in the Lower South. Whereas Tate emphasizes that after 1830 the South (including the Lower South) was moving away from democracy and toward class rule,²⁷ Owsley cites evidence by which he apparently intends to indicate that the Lower South was becoming more democratic in its political structure and ideology between 1830 and 1860: "The significance of the role of the plain folk in politics may be partly evaluated," Owsley maintains,

from some of the provisions of the new state constitutions adapted [sic] under popular pressure between 1830 and 1860. Universal white manhood suffrage, the popular election of virtually all county and state officers, and the abolition of property qualifications for office holding in most cases were good examples. If the Democratic party, as it has been constantly asserted, was primarily the agency of the common people and the Whig party that of the planters and business interests, then more often than not in the lower South, at least, the party of wealth took a beating.²⁸

²⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 24.

²⁸ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 141. It may be significant that Owsley does not commit himself here as to whether, in the late ante-bellum South, the Democratic Party was in fact primarily the agency of the common people. Owsley leaves the principle in hypothetical form, suggesting that he will let those who have asserted it assume the burden of its proof. Tate gives a different account of the Democratic Party in the South during the last fifteen years before the Civil War. According to Tate, "in the party upheaval of 1844, the Democrats became conservatives of the South; Jefferson and Jackson were repudiated." Tate does not toy with the hypothesis that the Democratic Party in the South was, as Owsley puts it, "primarily the agency of the common people." On the contrary, Tate implies that the cotton planters decided to go over to the Democratic Party because their interests could be served by so doing. Their interests were becoming "differentiated" from the interests of capital generally." See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 70.

No detailed analysis of which view--Tate's or Owsley's-- is historically sounder can be undertaken here. The conclusions of three scholars can, however, be briefly cited as an indication of the complexity of the question of whether the late ante-bellum South was, politically, a democracy or an aristocracy. Like Owsley, two of these scholars--Charles S. Sydnor and Clement Eaton--emphasize the extension of the machinery of political democracy, particularly in the trans-Appalachian South,²⁹ during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. But, unlike Owsley in his Plain Folk of the Old South,³⁰ they also emphasize (in the words of one of them, Clement Eaton) that "the creation of democratic machinery does not seem to have been followed by important social reforms for the common people, such as vigorous educational programs, fair taxation, good roads, and control over banks."³¹ Significantly, Eaton notes that "[t]oo often the sons of the plain people who arose to influential political positions forgot their lowly origins and became zealous agents of the vested interests and the ideology of the slavocracy."³²

²⁹ Charles S. Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism: 1819-1848 ([Baton Rouge], 1948), pp. 283-289; Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 313.

³⁰ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, pp. 138-142.

³¹ Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 318. For essentially the same point, see Sydnor, Development of Southern Sectionalism: 1819-1848, p. 289.

³² Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 318. For an elaboration of a similar point, see Thomas P. Abernethy, "Social Relations and Political Control in the Old Southwest," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (March, 1930), pp. 533, 536, 537. For evidence of a shift in Abernethy's attitude toward the effect of the plantation ideal on politics, see Thomas P. Abernethy, "New Light on the Old South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXVI (Spring, 1950), 278.

Somewhat in conflict with Owsley's implications as to the healthy tone of late ante-bellum politics, Eaton also notes that "in many counties courthouse rings and influential families controlled the local governments and the representatives in the legislature."³³ A third scholar, Avery O. Craven, who has recently surveyed developments in the 1850's, takes a position fairly close to Owsley's and somewhat different from that of Eaton and Sydnor. Craven emphasizes the fact that only a small percentage of the Congressmen and Senators from the South were of the planter class in the period 1850 to 1860.³⁴ So far as the attaining of the substance of democratic reforms is concerned, Craven observes that by the 1850's "progressive Southern leaders were thoroughly awakened to the need for free public schools in their section."³⁵ In the area of education, at least, Craven seems to hint that the direction of the South was toward white democracy.

³³ Eaton, History of the Old South, pp. 318-319.

³⁴ Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism: 1848-1861, p. 163. See footnote 26 on p. 267 of this dissertation.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 167. Tate's not very coherent account of education in the Lower South notes that there were "few lower schools there" and observes, in extenuation--"but then the planters did not believe in educating the masses." Having made this point, Tate turns round and declares that, as "Professor William E. Dodd has shown," the "planters [of the Cotton States], at the outbreak of the war, were in the lead in the ratio of educational progress--even as this was conceived in the democratic and statistics-loving North--and were not far behind in education as a whole." Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 37.

Nothing that I have found in Tate's writings directly explains his reluctance to grant the title of "democracy" to the polity of the late ante-bellum South. It is not that he is ignorant of the broad white suffrage in the Lower South: as early as his biography of Jefferson Davis (published in 1929), Tate specifically points out that the common people had the vote.³⁶ Furthermore, in the same volume Tate claims that in the middle of the nineteenth century

the Southern people had the best-informed political life this country has ever seen, or is likely to see again. Every man felt that the government--the Federal at first, then the Confederate when it came--was directly responsible to him, and he took the trouble, or rather the pleasure, for politics wholly filled his mind, to know the meaning of the issues of the day.³⁷

Since Tate agrees with Owsley that the common people not only voted but were well-informed as to the issues of the day, why does he not, with Owsley, lay hold on such prestige as he can for the Old South by maintaining that it was politically a democracy rather than an aristocracy? A partial answer may be that Tate, deriving his values and often his terminology from his image of medieval monarchy and feudalism, feels that the label "democracy" would scarcely reflect credit on the Old South. Critical though Tate is of aristocracy as compared with monarchy, the fact remains that Tate presents aristocracy as better than democracy when he outlines the "three types of power" with which

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Ibid., p. 36.

37

Ibid., p. 207.

our civilization is "acquainted."³⁸ Conceivably Tate may feel that such virtues as the political life of the Old South had in the period 1787 to 1865 were due to the co-existence of a responsible landed aristocracy and a body of farmers who could discern real merit in certain members of that aristocracy and who chose those members for at least some of the governmental offices.³⁹ Perhaps Tate may think that the political intelligence of the voting masses in the Old South consisted in the extent to which they had what Hilaire Belloc calls a "positive appetite for . . . the rule of a Gentry."⁴⁰ (If this is Tate's conviction, the differences between Tate and Davidson in this matter may be, after all, rather insubstantial; for even Davidson, despite his citing Owsley's proof that the "yeoman farmer rather than the planter or 'poor white' was the dominant figure by 1850 if not before, even in supposed big-plantation areas,"⁴¹ has declared recently that all Old Southerners,

³⁸ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 231-232. See pp. 69-71 of this dissertation for further discussion of Tate's views on monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.

³⁹ Cf. Styron, "Shall We Have an Aristocracy?" American Review, IV (November, 1934), 1-18; Hilaire Belloc, "Parliament and Monarchy," American Review, II (March, 1934), 574.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Donald Davidson, "Mr. Cash and the Proto-Dorian South," Southern Review, VII (Summer, 1941), 12. Davidson conveniently fails to specify the sense in which the yeoman was "dominant."

including slaves, were actuated by a "standard of judgment" which led to aristocratic leadership!)"⁴²

Reserved for somewhat more detailed treatment later in this chapter is perhaps the most plausible reason for Tate's sticking to the thesis that the Old South was politically, as well as socially and economically, an aristocracy--a thesis which he does not document very fully and which is by no means easily reconcilable with Owsley's assertion that the Old South was democratic in ideology and had, furthermore, a sounder economic basis for "free government" than did the middle states and the Northeast.⁴³ This plausible reason for Tate's sticking to his thesis that the Old South was an aristocracy is the fact that he could not discard the thesis without doing violence to his ideas on the position of the artist in the Old South. Tate's ideas about the arts in the Old South are inextricably interwoven with his idea that the planters' chief intellectual preoccupation was politics. Tate has long maintained that the planting aristocracy, because of its absorption in politics, had little interest in the artists of its own society. "Politics was the only career esteemed unreservedly by the planter class,

⁴² The "standard of judgment," Davidson indicates, was the "old Southern principle that material considerations, however important, are means not ends." Donald Davidson, "Some Day in Old Charleston," Georgia Review, III (Summer, 1949), 157, 158.

⁴³ Frank L. Owsley, "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History, VII (February, 1941), 4, 6.

because politics was its strongest protection":⁴⁴ this dictum Tate pronounced in 1929 in his biography of Jefferson Davis. Even after he publicly praised A. N. J. Den Hollander's "revolutionary" thesis proving that the majority of the non-slaveholding Old Southerners were not "poor whites" but yeomen subsistence farmers,⁴⁵ Tate has continued to propound his own thesis that the Old South had aristocratic rule; that "aristocracy" is "class-rule" and the "class must fight for interest and power"; and that because of the "furious contentions" that "threatened" the life of the Old South in the nineteenth century,

⁴⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 69. Cf. Thomas Nelson Page's statement that "[o]wing to the position which the South occupied because of the institution of slavery and the difficulties engendered by that institution, the whole fabric of life at the South was infused with politics, and oratory was universally cultivated." Page makes this remark in a context intended to suggest how absorption in politics left the Old South little energy for literature. Thomas Nelson Page, The Old South: Essays Social and Political (New York, 1919), p. 64.

⁴⁵ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 417. See A. N. J. Den Hollander, "The Tradition of 'Poor Whites,'" in Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch (Chapel Hill, 1934), pp. 403-431. Den Hollander's article and Tate's notice of it antedated by several years Owsley's articles and book on the social and economic health of the Old Southern plain folk. See such items as the following: Frank L. Owsley and Harriet C. Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45; Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (1949).

*[e]very gifted person went into politics, not merely the majority."⁴⁶

In reviewing the collection of Tate's essays which was published in 1948,⁴⁷ Richmond C. Beatty (who has been acquainted with Davidson, Owsley, and other Agrarians since the late 1920's)⁴⁸ makes himself a spokesman for the New Look which Owsley has given to the social and economic structure of the Old South in his recent studies of the plain folk.⁴⁹ Beatty

⁴⁶ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 267, 271. Richard M. Weaver, who (as has been seen in Chapter II of this dissertation) parallels Tate in seeing the Old Southern aristocracy as inferior to medieval feudal monarchy but superior to modern capitalistic democracy, elaborates Tatean ideas in explaining the Old South's insensitivity to the artist. Weaver explains that the "basic social organization of the Old South was aristocratic" and that the aristocracy never enjoyed "the kind of stable condition which allows such a group to become a patron of the arts." The Southern aristocracy, says Weaver, was engaged successively in battles with the Indians, the wilderness, and England; then it "saw slavery, the foundation-stone of the plantation economy, threatened by a world-wide humanitarian movement." It was not surprising, Weaver concludes, that the South came to look "with positive disfavor upon those employments ["commercial as well as intellectual"] which demoralize the warrior." (Weaver's final remark is not, so far as I recall, paralleled by anything in Tate's writings.) See Weaver, "Scholars or Gentlemen?" College English, VII (November, 1945), 72.

⁴⁷ Tate, On the Limits of Poetry--Selected Essays: 1928-1948.

⁴⁸ See Beatty, "A Personal Memoir of the Agrarians," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 11.

⁴⁹ See Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45; and Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (1949).

complains:

Mr. Tate is least rewarding when he undertakes to generalise about history. His statements regarding the Old South, for instance, here and elsewhere in his writings, scarcely indicate even an awareness of the fact that a middle class existed there, one which constituted approximately 80 per cent of the white population.⁵⁰

(Beatty does not pause to define the term "middle class" here, but he probably refers chiefly to the groups to which Owsley applies the term "plain country folk"--that is, groups including "the small slaveholding farmers; the non-slaveholders who owned the land which they cultivated; the numerous herdsmen on the frontier, pine barrens, and mountains; and those tenant farmers whose agricultural production, as recorded in the [Federal] census [of 1850

⁵⁰ Richmond C. Beatty, "Allen Tate as Man of Letters," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVII (April, 1948), 238-239.

or 1860], indicated thrift, energy, and self-respect."⁵¹ Beatty's criticism of Tate points up the contrast between the amount of space Tate has devoted to proving the economic and social well-being of the small landholder in the Old South and the amount of space Owsley has devoted to this subject in recent years. Beatty is misleading insofar as he fails to point out that Tate, several years before Owsley's research began to be published, noted Den Hollander's thesis that the "great majority" of "slaveless men" were not "poor whites," but "yeomen subsistence farmers."⁵² But Beatty does have a point when he implies one could read a great quantity of Tate's

⁵¹ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 8. By "small farmers" Owsley apparently means those owning 200 or fewer acres and one or two slaves. Ibid., p. 7. Owsley wishes to destroy the notion that Old Southern white society consisted of two clear-cut classes--slaveholders and "poor whites." Owsley emphasizes the diversity of economic groups in the late ante-bellum South: "Among the slaveholders there were great planters possessed of thousands of acres of land and hundreds of slaves, planters owning a thousand or fewer acres and two score slaves, small planters with five hundred acres and ten or fifteen slaves, large farmers with three or four hundred acres and five to ten slaves, small farmers with two hundred or fewer acres and one or two slaves. Among the nonslaveholders were large farmers employing hired labor who owned from two hundred to a thousand acres; a middle group which owned from one hundred to two hundred acres; 'one horse farmers' with less than one hundred acres; and landless renters, squatters, farm laborers, and a 'leisure class' whose means of support does not appear on the record." The "core of the social structure," Owsley says, "was a massive body of plain folk who were neither rich nor very poor." The majority of this body of plain folk "secured their food, clothing, and shelter from some rural pursuit, chiefly farming and livestock grazing." Ibid., pp. 7-8. This passage from Owsley's Plain Folk of the Old South is cited in order to show what Owsley means by such terms as "large farmers" and "small farmers."

⁵² Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 422.

writings on the Old South and scarcely realize that the great bulk of the Old Southern white population belonged to a "middle class" who were neither rich men nor "poor whites."⁵³ Certainly Tate has shown no great interest in, or capacity for, visualizing the nonslaveholding whites. Although in his novel The Fathers he makes brief use of plain people to achieve certain effects--for example, to suggest the possible solidarity between a plain man and a young gentleman in the crisis of Civil War--⁵⁴ the great bulk of his writings on the Old South, both in fiction and nonfiction, concerns the slaveowning whites. Having committed himself early in his career to the principle that the Old South was an aristocracy,⁵⁵ Tate has tended to center both his admiration of, and his disappointment in, the Old Southern social order around the question of how well the planter fulfilled the function of fostering a stable society. Beatty, perhaps under the influence of Owsley's recent statistical studies of the white plain folk, may be irritated not only by Tate's generalization as to the form of Southern society but also by Tate's occasional references to acquisitive or self-centered planters. Tate, as we shall see,⁵⁶ observes both

⁵³ Beatty, "Allen Tate as Man of Letters," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVII (April, 1938), 238-239.

⁵⁴ Tate, The Fathers, p. 300.

⁵⁵ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486.

⁵⁶ See pp. 316-318, 320ff, and 329-330 of this dissertation.

in eighteenth-century Virginia and in the nineteenth-century Cotton Kingdom instances in which the planters' monopoly of the best land relegated some of the lower strata of society to a position of permanent isolation and debasement or provoked in some of the lower classes a restless yearning to get on in the world. Such observations do not fit into the thesis which Owsley has been developing in recent years and which Beatty perhaps wishes to popularize. Furthermore, Tate's occasional allusions to the stereotyped views which certain planter-aristocrats took of the plainer people may not be pleasing to Beatty.⁵⁷ For example, Beatty may find annoying Tate's reference to the prejudice of the low-country Old Southern gentry against the highlanders⁵⁸ and Tate's suggestion that to the Tidewater Virginia gentleman the term "yeoman" meant "one who works with his hands"--the Tidewater gentleman's implication being that such a person was molded of inferior clay.⁵⁹ With Owsley's research (implying that the Old South had achieved a high degree of social and economic democracy) in mind, Beatty may find it unpleasant to face even Tate's infrequent and sometimes equivocal criticisms of some Old

⁵⁷ Owsley, for whose recent studies Beatty is unquestionably spokesman when he criticizes Tate's generalizations, declares that the "sense of unity between all [white?] social and economic groups can not be stressed too much, in view of the strongly and widely held opinion to the contrary." Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 134.

⁵⁸ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 417.

⁵⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 5.

Southern planters. That Beatty does not like Tate's constant reference to the feudal society of the Middle Ages for a standard by which to judge the Old South is suggested by Beatty's own ironic references to feudalism as a kind of collectivism, in that people's places were defined from above.⁶⁰

The basis for Beatty's contention that the Old South had a "middle class" consisting of about 80 percent of the white population⁶¹ is research published since the late 1930's by Frank L. Owsley and some of his graduate students and associates.⁶² Employing as his chief sources the Federal manuscript census reports and the county tax lists,⁶³ Owsley illustrates with statistical analysis of sample counties (in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee) his contention that by 1860 "[o]ver 60 per cent of the non-slaveholders outside the upper seaboard states . . . were . . .

⁶⁰ Beatty, "Allen Tate as Man of Letters," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVII (April, 1948), 239. Beatty, whose position here seems closer to Davidson's and Owsley's than to Tate's and Lytle's, may feel that Tate's overt medievalism is not likely to win friends for the Old South.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 238-239.

⁶² See, for example, Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45; Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South. Among the publications by his students and associates which Owsley cites in his Plain Folk of the Old South are the following: Blanche Henry Clark, The Tennessee Yeoman, 1840-1860 (Nashville, 1942); Harry L. Coles, "Some Notes on Slaveownership and Landownership, 1850-1860," Journal of Southern History, IX (August, 1943), 380-394; Herbert Weaver, Mississippi Farmers, 1850-1860 (Nashville, 1945).

⁶³ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 150.

landowners."⁶⁴ Owsley is particularly desirous of showing that the farmers were becoming more important in the economic structure as the ante-bellum period drew to a close. In one of his articles, he says that in the decade 1850-1860 in most of the Alabama counties whose records he examined the percentage of nonslaveholders owning land was increasing more rapidly than was the percentage of slaveholders owning land. On the basis of his statistics he concludes: "when both absolute and relative increase . . . takes place in the landownership of the nonslaveholder in the black belt it upsets the generalization that the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer in the Cotton Kingdom."⁶⁵

Certain of Owsley's claims as to the economic and social well-being of the plain folk are made not merely for the last decade prior to the Civil War but for the entire post-Revolutionary period down to 1860. Among the more controversial of these claims is Owsley's contention that slavery and the large-scale production of agricultural staples did not cause the small landholder to be segregated on poor lands⁶⁶ and that in fact the plain farmer was not segregated at all but was thoroughly intermingled with planters in all areas except

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-9, 151-229.

⁶⁵ Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 36.

⁶⁶ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, pp. 51-57.

the "sickly lowlands."⁶⁷ As a rule, Owsley maintains, the "plain farmers, who comprised the bulk of the Southern people, lived . . . neither in the piney woods nor in the mountains, except in the valleys." They lived, says Owsley, "dispersed over all the arable regions of the South and were settled in considerable numbers on every type of soil adapted to agricultural uses except the swamp and river lands."⁶⁸ The crucial proof for his thesis that slavery did not push the small man onto poor soil is to be found, Owsley evidently believes, in the following facts: "In the black belt outside of [the] . . . sickly lowlands the property of the nonslaveholders, the small slaveholders, and the great planters lay more or less intermingled, and the census and tax lists show that the values of their lands and their agricultural productions per acre were about the same."⁶⁹ Such segregation of classes as existed between regions "differing greatly in fertility of soil, and consequently in wealth," Owsley

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 76. Clement Eaton notes that "in contiguous areas the soil is often of unequal fertility." Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 456. The fact that the census and tax lists showed that the values of planters' and plain folk's lands and productions were about the same per acre may show something about planters' ability to obtain relatively low assessments on their land and to report their productions per acre in such a manner as not to suggest that their land was inordinately rich. This is pure speculation, however, and I do not recall having seen it suggested by any historian.

attributes chiefly to two factors: (1) the "herdsmen were . . . crowded from the arable lands by the agricultural husbandmen" and were "compelled" (if they did not settle as farmers) "to withdraw into the mountains, hills, and pine barrens, or to seek other frontiers";⁷⁰ and (2) the "agricultural immigrant . . . tended to seek out a country as nearly as possible like the one in which he formerly had lived": the "implication of this prejudice in favor" of land, climate, etc., like that of the area from which he came is (according to Owsley) that such immigrants to a newer area of the South in a majority of cases would voluntarily select not the "richest lands of the public domain, but merely the richest of the particular type of land to which they were accustomed in the East."⁷¹ Owsley thus emphasizes the element of personal choice in determining the economic fortunes of the immigrants. By their own choice those who wished to remain herdsmen and those agricultural immigrants who voluntarily settled on less rich lands tended to limit their families' future economic status, Owsley emphasizes. Slavery and the plantation system did not push either herdsmen or agricultural immigrants onto poor soils, Owsley insists.⁷² In this assertion Owsley differs from

⁷⁰ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 56. Owsley even says that "[p]erhaps in most cases they were content with land almost identical with that left behind, however poor such land had been." Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 51, 75-76. Owsley does say that agriculture (not slavery or the plantation system) tended to push the herdsmen into areas less suitable for farming. Ibid., p. 34.

Lewis Cecil Gray and Esther Katherine Thompson, whose survey of ante-bellum Southern agriculture takes into account facts and theories current before 1933. Alluding to John S. Bassett's discussion of the "'process by which slavery always eats out the life of a free yeomanry,"⁷³ Gray and Thompson comment on the "tendency of slavery and the plantation system, under favorable conditions, to supplant other types of economy."⁷⁴ Furthermore, although Gray and Thompson's two-volume study is by no means a moralistic critique of the slavery regime, these writers--unlike the recent Owsley--maintain that the

relative poverty of the South, as compared with the North, was largely the result of a system of rural economy characterized by extravagance both in production and consumption, a system that concentrated a large proportion of the money income in the hands of a relatively small percentage of the population. A large proportion of the remaining white population were pushed into isolated regions where they pursued a largely self-sufficing economy, characterized by a great deal of laborious work unrelieved by labor-saving devices that might have been provided under a commercial economy, alternating with long periods of leisure. ⁷⁵

Gray and Thompson's picture here of the contrast between the moneyed class and a large proportion of the subsistence farmers does not plead for any such adulation of the Old Southern socio-economic structure as Owsley's Plain Folk of the Old South does.

⁷³ John S. Bassett's Slavery in the State of North Carolina as quoted by Lewis C. Gray and Esther K. Thompson in Their History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (Washington, 1933), I, 444-445.

⁷⁴ Gray and Thompson, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States, I, 444.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 460.

Full discussion of the validity of Owsley's claims as to the economic and social well-being of the "middle class" in the ante-bellum South cannot be undertaken here. Clement Eaton--who published his history of the Old South in 1949 after much of Owsley's research had appeared--is perhaps wise in his refusal to reach a final conclusion as to the significance of Owsley's findings. Accepting many of Owsley's and Owsley's associates' findings, Eaton nevertheless concludes that the "question of how important in the whole economy of the South was the middle class of farmers as compared with the planter group remains an unsolved problem."⁷⁶ Granting the fact that the overwhelming majority of white farmers in the Old South owned their own land, Eaton does not throw out the insights of the earlier historians Lewis C. Gray and William E. Dodd⁷⁷ nor the observations of Fabian Linden (a recent critic of the Owsley thesis regarding economic democracy in the Old South).⁷⁸ Balancing the claims of Owsley and his associates against those of Dodd and Linden, Eaton makes the following tentative estimate of the yeoman farmers' economic position:

Professor William E. Dodd in his study of the lower South has pointed out the tremendous and unwholesome concentration of wealth in the hands of a small planter class. The Vanderbilt studies [e.g., the studies of

⁷⁶ Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 456.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 454-455.

⁷⁸ Fabian Linden, "Economic Democracy in the Slave South: An Appraisal of Some Recent Views," Journal of Negro History, XXI (April, 1946), 140-189.

Owsley, Blanche Henry Clark, Harry L. Coles, and Herbert Weaver}, on the other hand, emphasize the wide distribution of land ownership in the lower as well as in the upper South and the apparent prosperity of the yeoman farmers during the last decade of the ante-bellum period. The quality of land that the farmer tilled was more important than the number of acres which he owned. [This is Eaton's point.] The fact that the planters tended to monopolize the soils of high fertility and the farmers those of inferior quality meant that the planters in the rich black belts produced the "lion's share" of the money crops, cotton, sugar, and rice. The yeoman farmers, on the other hand, although they owned their little farms, lived a low standard of existence [sic] on a hog and corn economy. 79

Even if Owsley admits that the Old Southern yeoman subsistence farmers for the most part "lived a low standard of existence on a hog and corn economy,"⁸⁰ he still has one trump card to play in his game of proving that the Old Southern society had a "sound" economic basis for democracy.⁸¹ That trump card is his insistence that the plain folk "assumed, on the basis of much tangible evidence, that the door of economic opportunity swung open easily to the thrust of their own ambitious and energetic sons and daughters."⁸² Evidently

⁷⁹ Eaton, History of the Old South, pp. 456-457. Eaton cites Dodd's Cotton Kingdom, p. 24 and Linden's "Economic Democracy in the Slave South: An Appraisal of Some Recent Views," Journal of Negro History, XXXI (April, 1946), 140-189. The last sentence in Eaton's statement resembles the statement which we have quoted (on p. 284 of this dissertation) from Gray and Thompson, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, I, 460.

⁸⁰ Eaton, History of the Old South, p. 457.

⁸¹ The "average [Old] Southerner," says Owsley, had "economic independence. . . . The South . . . not only held strongly to the democratic ideology but it had a sound economic foundation for a free government." Owsley, "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History, VII (February, 1941), 6.

⁸² Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 133.

wishing to suggest a contrast between the attitude of the Old Southern white plain folk and the attitude of twentieth-century industrial labor, Owsley boasts:

The [Old] Southern folk were . . . not class conscious in the Marxian sense, for with rare exceptions they did not regard the planters and men of wealth as their oppressors [T]he knowledge that the economic door was not bolted against themselves and their children tended to stifle the development of a jealous and bitter class consciousness.

The abundance of cheap land, the generally high prices received for farm products and livestock, and the rapidly developing political democracy were the principal means of keeping the economic door unlocked, and preventing the development of a sense of frustration and resentment against the more wealthy. 83

Owsley makes much of the fact that "outside the older states individuals were constantly rising from the farmer to the planter class" and the apparent fact that "in the lower South and in Tennessee and Kentucky . . . the bulk of lawyers, physicians, preachers, editors, teachers, businessmen, and political leaders below the national level were members of families who were poor or only comfortably well off."⁸⁴

At first glance, Owsley's delight in the large number of Old Southerners who owned productive property and his emphasis on the economic mobility possible for the children of the plain folk may tempt the liberal to think of the recent Owsley as a democrat utterly unlike the Old Southern pro-slavery apologists. Before giving in to such a temptation, however, the liberal should note certain respects in which Owsley's instincts (though not his explicit arguments) resemble the instincts of some pro-slavery Old Southerners.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 133-134.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

Owsley's instincts resemble those of some pro-slavery Old Southerners in two closely related respects. In the first place, Owsley (like some pro-slavery apologists) has a blind spot which permits him, upon occasion, to ignore the fact that black slaves were people--and that they constituted a sizable portion of the agricultural population. Owsley is capable of speaking as if there were no black slave "proletariat" in the Old South. Eager to prove that the Old South had a "sound economic foundation for a free government," Owsley makes the impressive statements that the "average Southerner" had "economic independence"⁸⁵ and that in most of the Southern states "from 80 to 85 per cent of the agricultural population owned their land."⁸⁶ Evidently--at some level of his being below the level of conscious thought--Owsley does not consider the black slaves to be part of the agricultural population. In his desire to make the Old South seem admirable, he comfortably overlooks the fact that the "agricultural population" actually included a large number of black slaves--that, indeed, in the cotton states (with which much of the research in his Plain Folk of the Old South is concerned)⁸⁷ about 45 percent of the total population were

⁸⁵ Owsley, "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History, VII (February, 1941), 6

⁸⁶ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 16. Italics mine.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 171-209 et passim.

black slaves.⁸⁸ A second respect in which Owsley resembles certain pro-slavery thinkers lies in the at least partial coincidence between one of his defenses of the Old Southern order and the Old Southern pro-slavery plan for enlisting the loyalty of the middle class to the slavery regime. By emphasizing, with favorable comment, the indications that in wide areas of the South "the bulk of lawyers, . . . preachers, editors, teachers, . . . and political leaders below the national level" emerged from the middle and lower ranks of society,⁸⁹ Owsley has, whether intentionally or not, merely demonstrated that such a pro-slavery propagandist as Chancellor William Harper had hold of a workable truth when he maintained that the "free or intermediate class"--⁹⁰ the class (or classes) below the planters--might furnish professional men who, having been "educated under the caste system, would become its intellectual defenders, and make its blessings understood in all the land."⁹¹ When Owsley's delight in the cordial feelings of the plain man toward the planter and rich man is placed beside Chancellor William Harper's

⁸⁸ This estimate of the percentage of slaves in the total population of the cotton states is based on figures in Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York, 1942), I, 540.

⁸⁹ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 142.

⁹⁰ Chancellor William Harper as paraphrased in Dodd, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 56. Harper's pro-slavery document is found in the famous compendium of pro-slavery essays The Pro-Slavery Argument, as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States. Editions of this work were published in the 1850's.

⁹¹ Chancellor William Harper's idea, as interpreted by Tate in Jefferson Davis, p. 46.

deliberate plan for producing bumper crops of such cordiality, it becomes clear that a delight like Owsley's need not be associated with a delight in democracy--that, in fact, a delight such as Owsley's may be associated (as it was in Chancellor Harper's mind) with a delight in a kind of social stability which rests upon a fixed substratum of population and which is defended by a middle class identifying itself with those who exploit the fixed substratum.⁹²

Not only does the recent "democratic" Owsley when he discusses the relation of plain man to aristocrat or planter turn out to be closer than might at first be supposed to the pro-slavery mentality of certain Old Southerners, but also this "democratic" Owsley seems to share with the explicitly feudal-minded Tate and Lytle a certain partiality toward a society in which the poor man, in general, has no desire to exchange places with the rich. Indeed, although Owsley makes much of the vertical mobility possible in Old Southern society,⁹³ he also says that "relatively few of the plain folk . . . seem to have had a desire to become wealthy."⁹⁴ (Of this he is perhaps more confident than Tate, who as we shall see admits--and presumably

⁹² It should not be forgotten that Owsley's term "plain folk" includes some small slaveowners. See Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 8. Obviously the small slaveowner might act as a social binder, mediating between the nonslaveholder and the larger slaveowner. White social solidarity achieved at the price of chattel slavery would, however, to the liberal seem a poor thing indeed.

⁹³ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 142.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

deplores--that in the Lower South, at least, "everybody was 'on the make.'" ⁹⁵ In the second place, Owsley, in spite of his emphasis on the plain folk of the Old South, is not opposed to large landholders: in a recent statement about the Agrarian group of which he was a charter member, Owsley says that, in his opinion, there was not in the thought of the authors of I'll Take My Stand "any special advocacy of a society composed of small holders." The authors of I'll Take My Stand, Owsley says, "regarded the larger landholder--if he were not an absentee landlord--as a most necessary ingredient of a well balanced rural society." ⁹⁶ Added together, these two attitudes of Owsley (his pleasure in the fact that few of the Old Southern plain folk seem to have had the desire to become wealthy ⁹⁷ and his feeling that the Vanderbilt Agrarians considered the larger landholder a "most necessary ingredient of a well balanced rural society") ⁹⁸ produce a sum which is not necessarily far removed from the feudal idea of society which Tate and Lytle claim to admire.

Owsley's evident attraction to a society in which most small landholders do not wish to become wealthy and in which there are some larger landholders (who presumably mean to stay

⁹⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 33. Tate's discussion of this matter is treated on pp. 327-337 of this dissertation.

⁹⁶ Owsley, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 23.

⁹⁷ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, p. 134.

⁹⁸ Owsley, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 23.

large) is not the only point at which his own recent studies and Tate's or Lytle's earlier writings overlap. When Tate boasts of the willingness of the poor whites to follow General Robert E. Lee as loyally as did the wealthy,⁹⁹ he is really documenting at one and the same time his own image of the Old South as a feudal unity and Owsley's image of the Old South as a society in which the small white man could be, and usually was, well-disposed toward the rich man or the aristocrat. Tate, no less than Owsley, notes that the generally "folkish" or "plebeian" bearing of many planters, particularly in the Southwest, was one force binding classes together in social harmony.¹⁰⁰ (One of the more ingratiating of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' views is their contention that in the Old South, and in rural areas generally, relations between classes are more personal and friendly than are relations between classes

⁹⁹ Commenting on Ulrich B. Phillips' Life and Labor in the Old South, Tate says: "Professor Phillips shows us, without trying, the astonishing, interwoven homogeneity of southern society, in which all interests were bound up into a whole--an answer to the economists who have wondered why the poor whites followed Lee as faithfully as the rich, when they had no interest in the 'rich man's war and the poor man's fight.'" Tate, "Life in the Old South," New Republic, LIX (July 10, 1929), 211.

¹⁰⁰ Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, pp. 90, 134; Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 36. Tate, evidently taking over William E. Dodd's realistic suggestion, implies that the planters' democratic manners may have been prompted partly by the planters' interest in how the plain folk voted. Ibid.; and Dodd, Cotton Kingdom, p. 32.

in modern urban society.)¹⁰¹ Despite the pictures which Tate and Lytle give of some eighteenth-century planters' monopolistic practices¹⁰² and despite the critical attitude which they occasionally assume towards some nineteenth-century Southwesterners' acquisitiveness,¹⁰³ Lytle, no less than Tate and just as explicitly as Owsley, assumes that by the end of the ante-bellum period a genuine community of interest and community of feeling existed between planter and small farmer.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, though it may seem a paradox, it is perhaps when Tate and Lytle are most laudatory of the Old Southern planter that they most nearly approach the attitude pervading Owsley's recent studies; for Owsley, in his late works stressing the "democratic ideology" and the "sound economic foundation for . . .

101 John Crewe Ransom noted in his contribution to I'll Take My Stand that in the Old South "even the squires, and other classes too, did not define themselves very strictly. They were loosely graduated social orders, not fixed as in Europe. Their relations were personal and friendly." Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 14. Contrast the implications of Ransom's statement with the implications of Tate's remark on Calhoun's having "argued justly that only in a society of fixed classes can men be free." Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 39.

102 See pp. 314ff and 319ff of this dissertation for examples of Tate's and Lytle's implied criticism of some eighteenth-century planters.

103 Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South, On the Limits of Poetry," p. 270; Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 36; Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 16.

104 Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 422-423. This passage from Lytle's "The Backwoods Progression" is quoted on p. 167 of this dissertation.

free government"¹⁰⁵ possessed by the Old South, assumes (even though he does not openly emphasize) that the planters and large farmers with their slave labor system had, on the whole, no notable adverse effect upon the bulk of small white men.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the greatest paradox of all, so far as Tate's and Owsley's views on Old Southern "aristocracy" or "democracy" are concerned, lies, however, in the fact that the writings of the feudal Tate contain more stimulating social and economic criticisms of certain planters and other gentlemen and slaveholders than do the recent writings of the avowedly democratic Owsley. The limits of Tate's and Lytle's social and economic criticism of Old Southern slaveholders, planters, or aristocrats (three partly overlapping groups) will be a major concern of the next four sections of this chapter--the sections entitled "The Man of Letters, the Negro Slave, and the Aristocracy," "The Meaning of the West," "Defenders of the Southern Feudalism," and "Remains of the Seaboard Gentry."

¹⁰⁵ The quoted phrases are used to characterize the late ante-bellum South in Owsley's "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History, VII (February, 1941), 6.

¹⁰⁶ See Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South, and Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45.

III. THE MAN OF LETTERS, THE NEGRO SLAVE, AND THE ARISTOCRACY

Several critics give Tate credit for passing a penetrating adverse judgment upon Old Southern slavery or aristocracy or both in his nonfictional prose. These critics--Delmore Schwarz, Lionel Trilling, and Walter Sullivan¹⁰⁷--seem to base their remarks chiefly upon certain passages in Tate's essay "The Profession of Letters in the South."¹⁰⁸ All three ignore passages in Tate's other nonfiction, notably his Stonewall Jackson and his Jefferson Davis--passages which are laudatory of Calhoun, of some pro-slavery arguments, and of the Southern "feudal" aristocracy. These latter passages, which have been discussed in the chapter on Calhoun¹⁰⁹ in this dissertation, should be taken into account by anyone who, like Schwarz, Trilling, or Sullivan, presumes to characterize Tate's view of Old Southern slavery or aristocracy. The fact that some sympathetic commentators on Tate have omitted mention of his more illiberal remarks (that is, his remarks in praise of the ethics of slavery and Calhounian thought) does not, however, excuse those of us who wish to be liberal in our social views

¹⁰⁷ Delmore Schwarz is chiefly known as a poet, Lionel Trilling as a scholar and critic. Walter Sullivan was, in 1953, an instructor in English at Vanderbilt University. Trilling's and Sullivan's comments on Tate's novel The Fathers are discussed on pp. 417-420 and 423ff of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁸ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 272-273, 268, 277.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 39-40; Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301. These and similar passages from Tate's works are analysed on the following pages of this dissertation: pp. 173-174, 206-209, 216-221.

from noting those of Tate's remarks which lend some credence to the claim that Tate has, at times, judged Old Southern slavery and aristocracy severely. Analysis of the passages to which Schwarz, Trilling, and Sullivan apparently refer in Tate's writings will show (1) that aesthetic rather than moral considerations predominate in Tate's criticism of slavery and aristocracy, (2) That Tate objects more to the idea of an alien slave population than to the idea of chattel slavery in itself, and (3) that even in "The Profession of Letters in the South," an essay which nearly confirms the notion that Tate subjects slavery and aristocracy to a harsh judgment, Tate criticizes the Southern aristocracy primarily in comparison with European feudal society¹¹⁰ and presents the Old South as being better than not only the present capitalistic democracy but also "any system with which the modern planners, Marxian or other color, wish to replace the present order."¹¹¹

According to Schwarz, in Tate's "prose the South is condemned . . . for trying to build a civilization on the basis of an enslaved peasantry."¹¹² According to Trilling, Tate has in his nonfiction "explained the spiritual harm slavery

¹¹⁰ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 271-277.

¹¹¹ Tate attributes these sentiments to the "Southern man of letters"--who must surely be none other than Tate himself. Ibid., p. 275.

¹¹² Delmore Schwarz, "The Poetry of Allen Tate," Southern Review, V (Winter, 1940), 434.

worked¹¹³ in the Old South. Both Schwarz and Trilling seem to refer to remarks which Tate makes in attempting to account for the Old South's failure to produce an important and distinctively Southern literature.¹¹⁴ Tate's feeling of deprivation that the Old South left no really great art--that, on the whole, it was "not by poetry and statues timed"¹¹⁵--leads him to make what are perhaps the two most disparaging comments on Negro slavery to be found in his works. One of these has already been quoted.¹¹⁶ So complicated is his idea in the other of these passages that it must be quoted at some length:

the abolition of slavery did not make for a distinctively Southern literature. We must seek the cause of our limitations elsewhere. It is worth remarking, for the sake of argument, that chattel slavery is not demonstrably a worse form of slavery than any other upon which an aristocracy may base its power and wealth. That African chattel slavery was the worst groundwork conceivable for the growth of a great culture of European pattern, is scarcely at this day arguable. Still, as a favorable "cultural situation" it was probably worse than white-chattel, agricultural slavery only in degree. The distance between white master and black slave was unalterably greater than that between white master and white serf after the destruction of feudalism. The peasant is the soil. The Negro slave was a barrier between the ruling class and the soil. If we look at aristocracies in Europe, say in eighteenth-century England, we find at least genuine social classes, each carrying on a different level of the common culture. But in the Old South,

¹¹³ Lionel Trilling, "Allen Tate as Novelist," Partisan Review, VI (Fall, 1938), 112.

¹¹⁴ See especially Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 267-277.

¹¹⁵ The quoted phrase is taken from Tate's poem "Message from Abroad," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ See pp. 19-20 of this dissertation.

and under the worse form of slavery that afflicts both races today, genuine social classes could not exist. The enormous "difference" of the Negro doomed him from the beginning to an economic status purely; he has had much the same thinning influence upon the class above him as the anonymous city proletariat has had upon the culture of industrial capitalism. 117

Tate concludes by juxtaposing his belief that "[a]ll great cultures have been rooted in peasantries, in free peasantries, . . . such as the English yeomanry before the fourteenth century" and his contention that because the Old Southern Negro was "too different, too alien," the "white man got nothing from the Negro, no profound image of himself in terms of the soil."¹¹⁸ That his chief objection is to the Negro's "alien" quality rather than to any quality of the institution of slavery is underlined by a statement he makes in connection with his remark that William Peterfield Trent was wrong to blame the Old South's literary deficiency on any morally corrupting effects slavery may have had. "It was not that slavery was corrupt 'morally,'" Tate insists; and he continues: "Societies can bear an amazing amount of corruption and still produce high cultures." (Tate neatly avoids committing himself on whether slavery was "corrupt 'morally.'") Evidently Tate means to stress the word "black" in his statement accounting for the Old South's failure to create a great literature:

¹¹⁷ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 272-273. Compare this statement with passages quoted on pp. 216-220 of this dissertation.

¹¹⁸ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 273. Tate discreetly omits direct discussion of the various unfree laborers in which English culture was, prior to the fourteenth century, rooted.

"[b]lack slavery," says Tate, "could not nurture the white man in his own image."¹¹⁹ Walter Sullivan is closer than Schwars and Trilling are to Tate's actual ideas about the arts, the Negro slave, and the peasant: according to Sullivan, Tate has "deplored slavery on the ground that the Negroes did not function as a proper peasant class, which in turn is the sine qua non of a great culture."¹²⁰ Sullivan's statement seems to acknowledge that Tate's objection is as much to the Negro as to the fact of slavery.

Though he is close to the truth when he indicates the nature (and perhaps inadvertently the limits) of Tate's criticism of Negro slavery, Sullivan is misleading when he says Tate has contended that "the plutocracy of the North and the aristocracy of the South were similar in their essential qualities."¹²¹ Sullivan should also note some of Tate's contentions that the Northern plutocracy and the Southern aristocracy were dissimilar in some of their essential qualities. For example, he could mention Tate's contrast between the Southern white man's relation to the slave and the Northern industrialist's relation to his laborers--a contrast which

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 274.

¹²⁰ Walter Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 134.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Tate makes redound to the praise of the Southern slaveowner.¹²² Furthermore, Sullivan should mention the distinction which Tate makes between aristocracy and plutocracy in discussing "types of power."¹²³ These examples of Tate's propensity for contrasting the modern businessman and the ante-bellum gentleman have already been discussed in preceding chapters of this dissertation. An illustration not previously cited will further show Tate's willingness to picture the Old Southern gentleman as quite different from, and morally superior to, the twentieth-century businessman.¹²⁴ In this illustrative passage from one of Tate's essay-reviews, the Old Southern gentleman is made to stand for honor and the modern businessman is equated with unmitigated materialism. The passage is

¹²² See pp. 217-220 of this dissertation for a discussion of Tate's tendency to picture the relation of white master to black slave as preferable in certain respects to the industrialist's or businessman's relation to his employees. Tate probably means to refer to modern businessmen in general when he ostensibly echoes U. B. Phillips' implication that the "planter's responsibility and self-discipline made him a better man than, for example, the business pirate of today." Tate, "Life in the Old South" [review of Life and Labor in the Old South, by U. B. Phillips], New Republic, LIX (July 10, 1929), 212.

¹²³ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 231-232. This passage is discussed on pp. 68-71 of this dissertation.

¹²⁴ The early John Crowe Ransom self-consciously suggested the possibility of reviving an image of the Old Southern gentleman as a judgment upon the modern industrialist or businessman. Eager to point out how today's industrialism ruins the "middle and better classes of society" (as well as the poor), Ransom declared: "To make this point it may be necessary to revive such an antiquity as the Old Southern gentleman and his lady, and their scorn for the dollar-chasers." Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 23.

a comment on H. C. Brearley's essay entitled "The Pattern of Violence," which appeared in the symposium Culture in the South (edited by W. T. Couch). Admitting that Brearley "rightly places the origin of quick shooting in the South in the feudal spirit that the plantation system perpetuated in America," Tate hastens to imply that the code of honor which operated in the Old South dignified the shooting so that it became an activity far more honorable than are the everyday activities of the modern businessman. In a remarkable statement which incidentally condemns contemporary Southern acts of violence but reserves its ultimate condemnation for the methods of businessmen en masse, Tate says:

[The feudal] spirit [of the South] to a large extent survives, but the code of honour that once gave it dignity, prescribing the kinds of grievance that justify killing and setting the limits to the modes, has disappeared; we get plain murder in place of the duel. One may conclude, on the basis of Professor Brearley's argument, that the feudal conception of personal integrity, while it remains, has been overlaid with a middle-class social pattern. In 1878 The Code of Honour, an astonishingly late defense of the formal duel, published in Charleston, asserted that "the leading and most rancorous enemies of the Code of Honor are the materialistic Puritan sceptics." The code of honour set little value upon mere human life; it tended to dignify life with a rigid conception of its ideal integrity, without which it is worthless. (It may be remarked

that the modern business man is not sensitive to attacks upon his ethical methods if they are profitable.) 125

Since, as we have seen, Tate clearly believes that the Old Southern gentleman differed from the modern businessman or plutocrat in that the Old Southern gentleman had a code of honor¹²⁶ and was free to behave morally toward his labor,¹²⁷ we are faced with the following question: What are the "essential qualities" in which (according to Sullivan) Tate finds the Old Southern aristocracy and the plutocracy of the North or East "similar"?¹²⁸ Probably Sullivan is referring principally to the Old Southern aristocrat's lack of interest in the artist (for example, Edgar Allan Poe)--a lack of interest which the Northern plutocrat, past and present, presumably has shared. In the essay "The Profession of Letters in the South," Tate says that Poe was, in effect, driven out of the South by

¹²⁵ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 425-426. Tate's satiric piece entitled "An Exegesis on Dr. Swift" uses the gentleman (though not specifically the Old Southern gentleman) as a standard by which to chastise the (in his opinion) standardless twentieth-century world of businessmen and common men. Allen Tate, "An Exegesis on Dr. Swift," This Quarter, III (March, 1931), 475-483. "An Exegesis on Dr. Swift" also appears in Allen Tate, The Hovering Fly and Other Essays (Cummington, Massachusetts, 1948), pp. 74-81.

For amusing examples of Tate's own personal adherence to something resembling the Old Southern code of honor and cult of manners, see the following: Tate, "The Question of the Pound Award," Partisan Review, XVI (May, 1949), 520; Allen Tate, "Homage to St.-John Perse," Nine, II (May, 1950), 78.

¹²⁶ See pp. 301-302 of this dissertation.

¹²⁷ See pp. 216-220 of this dissertation.

¹²⁸ Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 134.

the planter aristocracy, symbolized in the person of John Allan--who, in driving Poe away, "shrewdly" guessed the "practical instincts" of Southern society.¹²⁹ "We made it impossible for Poe to live south of the Potomac," Tate declares, and he states quite explicitly: "Aristocracy drove him out." Of the Northeastern plutocrat's treatment of Poe, Tate says: "Plutocracy, in the East, starved him to death."¹³⁰ Sullivan would seem at first glance to have in Tate's comment on Poe an instance in which Tate contends that the Southern aristocracy and the Northern plutocracy were "similar in [at least one of] their essential qualities."¹³¹ Yet even in this instance, Tate manages to make the plutocrat appear worse than the Southern aristocrat. Choosing between the exile inflicted by the Southern aristocracy and the starvation inflicted by the plutocracy, Tate declares:

I prefer the procedure of the South; it knew its own mind, knew what kind of society it wanted. The East, bent upon making money, could tolerate, as it still tolerates, any kind of disorder on the fringe of society as long as the disorder does not

¹²⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 276-277.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

¹³¹ Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 134.

interfere with money-making. It did not know its ¹³² own social mind; it was, and still is, plutocracy.

In another essay Tate develops more explicitly his preference for the kind of restriction which the Old Southern aristocracy

¹³² Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 268. Rather irresponsibly, Tate subtly implies that Poe's mind was at odds with the "social mind" of the Old Southern aristocracy: "It was obvious, even to John Allan," Tate says, "that here was no dabbler who would write pleasant, genteel poems and stories for magazines where other dabbling gentlemen printed their pleasant, genteel stories and poems. Anybody could have looked at Poe and known that he meant business." (Ibid., pp. 268, 277.) What Tate himself fails to make obvious is why Poe's defense of slavery and his attack on democracy and industrialism may not be taken as evidence that Poe himself "shrewdly" guessed the "practical instincts" of the aristocracy and attempted to adapt himself to them. For Poe's defense of slavery, see Poe [Review of Slavery in the United States, by J. K. Paulding, and of an anonymous pamphlet entitled The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists], The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Harrison, VIII, 265-275. See again Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 277--the passage which is quoted on p. 303 of this dissertation. See pp. 80-81 of this dissertation for comment on Tate's recent indication of his awareness of, and contempt for, those who disparage Poe's The Colloquy of Monos and Una as the work of a "reactionary Southerner who disliked democracy and industrialism." Tate, "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God," Forlorn Demon, p. 65.

placed upon the artist.¹³³ At the same time Tate specifically

¹³³ Allen Tate, "Comment: Editorial Note," Poetry, XL (May, 1932), 92-93. In his early essay "Last Days of the Charming Lady" Tate criticizes the aristocracy (much more explicitly than he has since) for their lack of interest in insights which might be upsetting to the status quo. See pp. 22-23 and 55-59 of this dissertation for passages quoted from Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXII (October 28, 1925), 485-486. Compare these passages with passages quoted on pp. 303-306 of this dissertation. Note that in statements quoted on pp. 303-306 of this dissertation Tate expresses a certain respect for the Old Southern aristocracy's understanding of, and insistence upon, ideas which would clearly support their social order. At the same time, Tate expresses dislike of the writer who is merely genteel. See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 277; and Tate, "Comment: Editorial Note," Poetry, XL (May, 1932), 92.

Richard M. Weaver develops (even more fully than Tate did in his early article "Last Days of the Charming Lady") the idea that the Old Southern aristocracy placed rigid limits on the sensibility of writers. According to Weaver, an aristocracy (such as that of the Old South) may regard writers with "hostility" because writers' "work necessarily leads to refinements of sensibility which leave a man unsuited for the brutish business of fighting" and because their writings may precipitate "troublesome debate which might lead to disturbances." The aristocracy, says Weaver, wants a "general sanction." See Weaver, "Scholars or Gentlemen?" College English, VII (November, 1945), 72; and see other passages quoted from Weaver in footnote 31 on p. 113 of this dissertation.

Amusingly enough, before publishing his article on the aristocracy's demand for a "general sanction," Weaver published an essay praising Albert Taylor Bledsoe, an author who gave just such a general sanction to aristocracy and to slavery. Weaver noted that the modern world needs such superhuman sanctions for government and social order as Bledsoe used in defense of the Old Southern social order. Bledsoe, said Weaver, "believed in a structural society," he combatted the "secular theory of government--whose classic expression is, of course, government of the people, by the people, and for the people," and he defended "a religious, authoritarian theory of government." Of Bledsoe--a man who would appear to the liberal to be an intellectual slave of the Old Southern slavocracy--Weaver declared: "It would seem that [today] history is again trying to teach the lesson which he vainly endeavored after the Civil War to make heard . . . This is the need of an abstract, metaphysical law which will hold when all else fails." Weaver, "Albert Taylor Bledsoe," Sewanee Review, LII (Winter, 1944), 36, 42, 40, 44.

notes that in grasp of older literature and ideas, the Old Southern aristocrat was superior to the modern industrialist:

Society in the United States, in this era [the twentieth century], is not more concerned about literature than the plantation was: the plantation did not create a great literature but it read great literature and it had a profound grasp of ideas relevant to its needs--the only kind of ideas any society ever achieves. The industrialist knows little or nothing, neither imaginative literature nor political philosophy. If the modern writer, unlike the old Southern writer, is emancipated from the demands of social conformity, it is not because he has been intelligently emancipated; it is rather that the decay of social standards has left him free, but nevertheless hanging in the air. The place of the old Southern writer was narrow, it hardly existed, but to the extent that it did exist, it was defined. 134

Only in older European feudal communities can Tate find instances in which the writer was a "member of an organic society."¹³⁵ In the Old South, as well as in modern plutocratic

¹³⁴ Tate, "Comment: Editorial Note," *Poetry*, XL (May, 1932), 92-93. Hardly reconcilable with Tate's report here on the planter's reading great literature is the description which he gives in a moment of sympathetic rage over the fate of old Southern poet Thomas Holley Chivers. Chivers, Tate reports, "found the rich mercantile society of the east more hospitable to writers, less disposed to think them useless and queer, than the planting aristocracy, which occupied itself mainly with politics (being on the political defensive), with gaming and fighting, with extreme Protestantism, and with novels of Sir Walter Scott." Tate, "The Lost Poet of Georgia," *New Republic*, LXIII (July 23, 1930), 294. The description of the planting aristocracy here is Tate's rather than Chivers'. It is perhaps the most unflattering portrait of the planting aristocracy to be found in Tate's writings after the essay "Last Days of the Charming Lady," which was published in the *New Republic* in 1925. (See pp. 22-23 and 54-58 of this dissertation for analysis of "Last Days of the Charming Lady.")

¹³⁵ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 267.

culture, Tate barely implies, the writer was related to his society through the "cash nexus."¹³⁶ The ultimate standard to which Tate returns in evaluating the Old South is a standard set by the feudal past. Inconsolably Tate looks back to the seventeenth century when the Earl of Bridgewater, whose virtue it was to be still "to some extent . . . a feudal noble," invited the young Milton to write a masque for "certain revels to be celebrated at Ludlow Castle."¹³⁷ Presuming to know (by research or intuition) more than the prominent Milton scholar, J. Milton French, presumed to know (as late as 1954) about the circumstances of the masque's performance,¹³⁸ Tate describes the "feudal" character of the performance:

The whole celebration was "at home"; it was a part of the community life, the common people were present, and the poet was a spiritual member of the society gathered there. He might not be a gentleman: had Milton become a member of Egerton's "household" he would have been a sort of upper servant. But he would have been a member of the social and spiritual community. ¹³⁹

In the end Tate's most daring criticism of the Southern aristocracy as a class (that is, his most daring since his early essay "Last Days of the Charming Lady")¹⁴⁰ resolves itself

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 277.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 275.

¹³⁸ Conversation with Dr. J. Milton French, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, in July, 1954.

¹³⁹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 275-276.

¹⁴⁰ Tate, "Last Days of the Charming Lady," Nation, CXXI (October 28, 1925), 485-486. This essay is discussed on pp. 22-23 and 55-59 of this dissertation.

into a hankering not after democracy but after a more feudal structure of society. Furthermore, as compensation for any bad things he has said about the Old South, Tate makes a point of repeating in "The Profession of Letters in the South" the "feudal" virtues which he claims elsewhere for the Old Southern aristocracy: he at least partly cancels the effect of his critical remarks on slavery and aristocracy in this essay by reiterating in the same essay that the Old South was distinguished for its "comparative stability, its realistic limitation of the acquisitive impulse, its preference for human relations compared to relations economic."¹⁴¹

III. THE MEANING OF THE WEST

In Tate's and Lytle's allusions to the Westward movement in Old Southern history may best be seen, in detail, what the liberal must view as the strength and the limitations of these

¹⁴¹ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 275. Compare these virtues with the virtues attributed by Tate to the Old Southern aristocracy in general in his Jefferson Davis, p. 301. By citing these virtues in "The Profession of Letters in the South," Tate provides an avenue of escape from some of the harsher implications of the criticism he offers of the Old South. If the white Old South was characterized by a "realistic limitation of the acquisitive impulse" and a "preference for human relations compared to relations economic," then that white Old South can hardly be thought of as having willingly bought and retained a labor force whose "enormous difference" consigned it to a purely economic status. (See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 275, 273.) In his Jefferson Davis, Tate locates the "ultimate responsibility for slavery," not upon the white South, but upon the African "operators, who drove their fellow Negroes in herds to the coast where they went to the highest white bidder." Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 39.

Vanderbilt Traditionalists' view of the defects of some individual Old Southern planters. In defiance of his tendency to attribute "responsibility and self-discipline" to the planters as a class,¹⁴² Tate (as well as Lytle) has, upon occasion, probed those forces--chiefly the greediness or the inordinate pride of some of the planter-gentry, together with the availability of new land in the West--which in his opinion marred the feudal harmony and stability of Old Southern society. Both Tate and Lytle are willing to mention what they evidently think of as "subversive" tendencies in Old Southern society--tendencies which ran counter to their ideal "feudal" image of the Old South as a stable community of Calhounian planters and happy farmers. Some of the subversive tendencies they mention originate in high places: the laudatory image of the "feudal" planter which, we have seen, is adumbrated in Tate's picture of Calhoun¹⁴³ should not prevent us from noting that Tate (as well as Lytle) can speak unflatteringly of some planter-aristocrats or new-rich planters whose behavior was in his opinion subversive of Southern stability. In both Tate's and Lytle's works may be found unfavorable comment on some members of the eighteenth-century tobacco aristocracy of the seaboard states,¹⁴⁴ on some cotton

¹⁴² Tate, "Life in the Old South," New Republic, LIX (July 10, 1929), 212. For a fuller citation, see footnote 122 in this chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁴³ See, especially, pp. 187, 206-209, and 216-217 of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁴ See the subsection entitled "Migration in the Eighteenth Century: The Desire for Good Land" in this chapter of this dissertation.

snobs of the nineteenth-century Lower South,¹⁴⁵ and on some materialistic planter-politicians of the Upper Southwest (Tennessee and Kentucky).¹⁴⁶ In each of these groups are individuals who, Tate and Lytle imply, behaved in such a way as not to encourage the small farmer to feel an integral and contented part of the society.

As we shall see, portions of Tate's writings on what he considers regrettable behavior on the part of some Old Southern planters may be read with considerable approval by the liberal. For the liberal will be prepared, at least, to agree with Tate's occasional implication that the materialism or self-centeredness of certain members of the upper classes probably helped to provoke imitativensess or resentment (or a mixture of the two) in some members of the white middle and lower classes. At the same time, the value of some of Tate's critical insights into the behavior of certain planters will, to the liberal, seem to be vitiated by Tate's attraction to John C. Calhoun, Robert Barnwell Rhett, and William Lowndes Yancey.¹⁴⁷ The liberal can feel little attraction to the kind of social stability or so-called limited acquisitiveness for which men like these three ardent pro-slavery propagandists stood. Furthermore, the liberal will feel that Tate's admissions of the acquisitiveness or self-centeredness of certain members of the Old Southern aristocracy

¹⁴⁵ See pp. 328 and 395 of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁶ See the subsection entitled "Western Subversives" in this chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ See pp. 174, 178, 180-182, 187, 206-209, 216-217, 338-339, 351-353, 362-366, and 397n of this dissertation.

must not be isolated from Tate's implication that a feudal nobility, rather than a perpetually recruited Jeffersonian natural aristocracy of virtue and talents,¹⁴⁸ is the ultimate standard against which the Old Southern planter or aristocrat is to be measured. The liberal will constantly remember that when Tate and Lytle criticize the Old Southern aristocrat, they are apt to imply that the aristocrat was culpable in proportion as he was like the eighteenth-century English

¹⁴⁸ See Thomas Jefferson's famous letter (written in 1813) to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Democracy, ed. Padover, p. 82.

Some admirers of Lytle and the Old South might contend that Lytle's comment on the fluidity of nineteenth-century Southern society is evidence of Lytle's approval of a perpetually recruited natural aristocracy. The difference between Lytle's admirers and the liberal would hinge on the question of what they designate as "virtues" and "talents." That the "plain man" in the first half of the nineteenth century "furnished vigorous recruits to the plantocracy" (this is Lytle's phrasing) would be to the liberal no proof that Southern society was so organized as to recruit a natural aristocracy of virtue and talents. (See Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I [September, 1933], 423.) Certain of Lytle's statements suggest that he believes a natural aristocracy or "peerage" may be revealed simply by the greatness of the agricultural estate one possesses. The planters of the Old South he evidently considers to have been, on the whole, such a natural aristocracy, the destruction of which he regrets, for he says: "In a society which recognizes the supremacy of nature and man's frailty each individual enjoys or subdues nature according to his capacity and desires, and those who accumulate great estates deserve whatever reward attends them, for they have striven mightily. This is the common way a ruling class establishes itself. The South, and particularly the plain people, has never recovered from the embarrassment it suffered when this class [the ruling planter class] was destroyed before the cultural lines became hard and fast." Lytle, "The Hind Tit," I'll Take My Stand, pp. 209-210. For comment on the "natural peerage" which is "based on a relative possession and enjoyment of nature," see Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 9.

gentleman and unlike the feudal noble.¹⁴⁹ Such an implication, the liberal will note, must spring from Tate's and Lytle's assumption that a feudal nobility, or something like it, is desirable.

Both Tate and Lytle are far too prone to assume that the faults of the Old Southern social structure can be almost miraculously disposed of, in retrospect, by saying that at a certain point in Southern development the social structure became more feudal. One of Tate's comments on a facile discussion of Old Southern defects may well be turned upon Tate himself. William Peterfield Trent, Tate has acidly maintained, thought that he had "laid bare all the Southern defects with the black magic talisman, Slavery" and that the "defects could be whisked away . . . with 'essential faith in American democracy.'"¹⁵⁰ Of Tate--and even more clearly of Lytle--it may be said that they use Feudalism as a white magic talisman to whisk away defects which even they themselves have attributed to important individuals in Old Southern society. An essential

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.; Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 275-277. In such an imaginative work as his novel The Fathers, Tate to a certain extent transcends the limitations of his historical stereotypes. (See pp. 409ff of this dissertation.) But though he presents sympathetically, in this novel, a somewhat Jeffersonian gentleman who scoffs at the idea of a nobility, Tate nevertheless emphasizes through the character of this same gentleman the fine human qualities which may flower from a society of persistent classes--classes based on the privileges and responsibilities which accompany inherited land. Tate, The Fathers, p. 11 et passim.

¹⁵⁰ Tate's quotation from, and comment on, William Peterfield Trent's biography of William Gilmore Simms. See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 272.

faith in feudalism is the secular religion to which Tate's and Lytle's image of the Old South would convert us.

One curious result of Tate's and Lytle's automatic homage before the idea of feudalism is their apparent willingness at a moment's notice to admire an individual or class who can encourage loyalty or stability (rather than envy or emulation) in the masses of white farmers--even though that individual or class (like the planters of the Cotton Kingdom) has but recently been on the make. This willingness, as we shall see later, gives rise to the central paradox in Lytle's portrait of Bedford Forrest.¹⁵¹ A similar willingness haunts the pages of Tate's Jefferson Davis and leads Tate into curious inconsistencies as he tries to fit Lower Southern planters, whom he has just labelled acquisitive, into his myth of a stable, relatively non-acquisitive Southern "feudal" order.¹⁵² As a first step in our examination of Tate's and Lytle's attempts to exorcise the demon acquisitiveness from the stable paradise of farmers and planters which they sometimes like to think the Old South was becoming when its career was cut short by the

¹⁵¹ See pp. 380ff of this dissertation.

¹⁵² See pp. 327-337 and 356-366 of this dissertation.

Civil War,¹⁵³ we shall summarize their picture of what they might (not altogether plausibly) call the non-feudal tendencies in the eighteenth-century South. These tendencies are presented by Tate and Lytle as among the causes for the westward movement of small men in the eighteenth century.

Migration in the Eighteenth Century: The Desire for Good Land

The task of Tate and Lytle in fitting the nineteenth-century Southwestern aristocracy into their myth of a stable, relatively non-acquisitive Old South is not made any easier by Lytle's and Tate's own picture of the eighteenth-century aristocracy of the seaboard South. Lytle pictures that aristocracy as essentially acquisitive--the antithesis, he implies, of the European feudal aristocracy of earlier centuries. The Westward movement in the eighteenth century Lytle sees as "an

¹⁵³ Lytle suggests that the South's "feudal culture," which in 1860 was "fast becoming static," was undone by the fact that it had to fight the North, "a more strenuous enemy than the Wilderness." See Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 28. Had it not been for war, Lytle thinks, the plantation would have persisted indefinitely "without strikes, or unemployment." See Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 431-432. Tate sometimes admits that defects in Old Southern culture contributed to the Old South's downfall. (See p. 168 and pp. 235, 249n of this dissertation. See also p. 42n of this dissertation for a discussion of the limits of Tate's willingness, in his essay "Religion and the Old South," to point to radical defects in Old Southern society.) In Jefferson Davis, however, though Tate admits there were incidental faults in the Lower Southern social structure and though he points to weaknesses in Old Southern leadership, he concludes his study with a strong metaphor to suggest that the "good" Old South (the feudal South) was killed by outside forces, rather than by some flaw or evil in its own culture: Old New England and the Old South are both dead today, Tate says, but the "Confederate veteran may pleasantly reflect . . . that the South, at least, was not hoist upon its own petard." Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 302.

advanced stage of a European revolution."¹⁵⁴ The eighteenth-century "Colonial gentleman, like his English counterpart, was an agent of those disrupting forces" which, says Lytle, had been let loose by the disintegration of feudalism and the declining influence of the Church from the sixteenth century on.¹⁵⁵ According to Lytle, in the medieval world, the "economic commodity" was the "thing-to-be-used"; in the modern world the "economic commodity" became the "thing-to-be-sold." In England the "enclosure of the lands common to landlord and peasant took away the basis for the peasant's economic freedom," Lytle declares, as a preface to the following account of the

¹⁵⁴ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 411. An earlier stage of this "revolution" (as he sees it) Lytle pictures in his novel At the Moon's Inn, the story of De Soto's quest for riches in the American Wilderness. De Soto's continuation of his quest--even, finally, in defiance of his priest's command that he abandon the enterprise--Lytle makes into a parable of the supposed historic decision of mankind to give up the medieval idea of religious authority curbing the inordinate desires of men for the things of this world. In continuing his pursuit of gold after the priest had indicated that such was not the will of God, De Soto had (says Lytle) "set his private will outside the guidance and discipline of the Church, the will which, unrestrained, serves only the senses, as the senses only the flesh. He, a layman, had undertaken to interpret God's mind. This is what his decision meant, no matter if he denied or disguised it. From here it is only one step further to supplant God's will by man's and call it divine--man made God, man with all his frailties and pride setting up the goods of the world over the good of heavenly grace. Where would this bring him? Where would it lead them all?" These meditations over, and questions about, the significance of De Soto's decision are inserted by Lytle into the mind of one of De Soto's men, Nuño de Tovar, through whose consciousness much of the novel's action is projected. See Andrew [N.] Lytle, At the Moon's Inn (Indianapolis, 1941), p. 374.

¹⁵⁵ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 411.

seventeenth and eighteenth century migration to America:

[W]hen the North American continent was discovered (the world was now a thing-to-be-sold), it served as a refuge for the disaffected and a new field to conquer for men already masters of the technique of conquest. It was against this exploitation that the backwoods in the new world, where the land to the West was plentiful, grew darkly on the fringe of Colonial society, for the Colonial backwoodsman was not one of the conquerors. He was fleeing from them--from the same sort of domestic conqueror he had encountered in the old world. 156

Tate documents Lytle's picture of the eighteenth-century seaboard South (especially Maryland) in his biography of Stonewall Jackson¹⁵⁷ and also in his story entitled "The Migration."¹⁵⁸ Lytle documents his own picture with references to the aristocratic William Byrd's contempt for the "poor-white" denizens of "Lubberland" in the early eighteenth century¹⁵⁹ and with allusions to the attitude of Bedford Forrest's great-grandfather toward the rich planters of mid-eighteenth-century Virginia.¹⁶⁰ We shall look at some of these accounts of the eighteenth-century seaboard society as a prelude to the account which Tate gives of the nineteenth-century migration into the Lower South.

Tate's account of the coming to America of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson's great-grandfather illustrates Lytle's

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 412.

¹⁵⁷ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 15-18.

¹⁵⁸ Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (September, 1934), 86, 89, et passim. See discussion below.

¹⁵⁹ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 410-411.

¹⁶⁰ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 9.

summary of the forces which prompted the colonial settlement in America. John Jackson, Stonewall's ancestor, came of Scotch-Irish tenants whose rents had been raised in Ireland in 1728. Ten years after his parents had left Ireland for London, John Jackson came to Maryland, where according to Tate "a small, powerful aristocracy, different from the looser feudal order of Virginia . . . , had got hold of immense tracts of land and shut out the small farmer." Tate admits that John Jackson and Eliza Cummins (also an immigrant) whom he married after she had served her indenture, probably did not prosper or "gain . . . a foothold in the society of tidewater Maryland."¹⁶¹ Their removal to land on the frontier of Virginia Tate presents as the logical consequence of the fact that by the middle of the eighteenth century Tidewater Virginia was occupied by "vast" plantations interspersed with the holdings of "small landowners" (either "independent farmers or tenantry to the squires"). Tidewater Virginia, says Tate, was not "thickly populated"--for the most part it was "divided up into vast estates," which, "under the laws of entail, could not be broken up to make room for the [Scotch-Irish] immigrants." Although Tate can admit that the bottom strata of this society were "poor white," who by the mid-eighteenth century had "sunk to the squalor they have not got out of to this day," he seems strangely fascinated by the "vast extent of an old Virginian plantation"--an area which, "conceived as fixed productive property rather than as

¹⁶¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 16.

negotiable wealth, brings no image whatever to the modern urban mind."¹⁶² Even as he seems to be accounting for the westward movement of the small man by pointing out that much of the land in the Tidewater had been engrossed by relatively few families, Tate seems to betray an aesthetic attraction toward the large fixed productive property.¹⁶³ This is perhaps indicative of the fact that--as we have said before--Tate and Lytle seem to be, not egalitarians, but rather men in search of a stable class society.

Lytle's account of migration in the eighteenth century shows that he is interested in a society which will have a clearly defined structure, while at the same time it permits a certain independence to the yeoman or subsistence farmers. Shadrach Forrest (Bedford Forrest's great-grandfather) left Virginia in 1740, Lytle tells us, to settle in North Carolina because "Virginia land, that is, its best land, was in the hands of the squires and the rich men who fashioned their ways after the English gentry of the eighteenth century, and not after an earlier day when baron and yeoman met on freer ground." (With these words Lytle underlines his predisposition to exalt the

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁶³ John Crowe Ransom implied a philosophic basis for the Agrarians' approval of certain kinds of large properties when he said that the "Southern 'agrarians' . . . would not object on aesthetic grounds to larger private properties, always provided that they permit of personal and aesthetic rather than impersonal and abstract operation." John Crowe Ransom [Review of Forces in American Criticism, by Bernard Smith], Free America, IV (January, 1940), 20.

earlier feudal society of England.) North Carolina, "though strictly governed by its squires, was a yeoman state," Lytle says, in words which show his willingness to think favorably of a state which has a definite ruling class. There were "better chances" in North Carolina to "settle on good land," Lytle points out; the "farms were small, the slaves few, and the people who owned them worked alongside them in the fields."¹⁶⁴ Despite his emphasis on the well-being of the yeomen in North Carolina, however, Lytle is careful to indicate that in the eighteenth century the insidious spirit of egalitarianism had not corrupted his North Carolina paradise: there was a "natural peerage" in North Carolina--a "peerage based on a relative possession and enjoyment of nature." North Carolina had both rich men and poor men; and men recognized there that "economic and political independence did not mean that all men were equal in these matters."¹⁶⁵

Tate's short story "The Migration," another work containing an evaluation of some of the eighteenth-century tobacco aristocracy, records the experience of a Scotch-Irish immigrant, Rhoda Elwin (a man), much of whose life is spent in flight from, and reaction against, the aristocracy of British extraction in the American colonies. As narrator of the story, Tate employs the immigrant's son (Rhodam Elwin), who records his "remarkable" father's life and times for the "instruction of

¹⁶⁴ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

his posterity."¹⁶⁶ The information which concerns us in the story may be summarized as follows: in the first place, Rhodam reveals the resentment of his Scotch-Irish immigrant father and mother against the tobacco-raising planter-aristocrats of eighteenth-century Virginia;¹⁶⁷ in the second place, he records the gradual climb of his father, by a succession of moves, to the proprietorship of slaves and a thousand-acre grain and hog-raising plantation in Tennessee;¹⁶⁸ in the third place, he implies that his father is morally superior, not only to the wealthier tobacco-growing gentry and ostentatious nouveaux riches, but also to the nonslaveholding (and apparently anti-slavery) farmers who in 1819 sell their land in Tennessee (at a profit) to the tobacco-makers and move to a free state.¹⁶⁹

"The Migration" shows that Tate is willing to picture how the exclusiveness of the eighteenth-century tobacco planters might provoke an ambitious immigrant to start a series of moves, the aim of which was the ownership of thousands of acres. By suggesting that the planters' refusal to sell Rhoda any of the best land along the creeks may have played a part in initiating Rhoda's desire to move West and to "go on and on to new land,"¹⁷⁰ Tate shows that he can visualize how the planters' behavior

¹⁶⁶ Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 83.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 86, 88, 89, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 86, 89, 97-98, 108.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 109-110, 111-112.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 86, 98.

might contribute to a certain disunity and instability in society. The story thus documents Lytle's criticism of the eighteenth-century Virginia aristocracy for its monopoly of the best land.¹⁷¹ Rhodam's thought that he would someday like to own thousands of acres of land--acres which keep receding as he makes successive moves¹⁷²--can be seen as an instance in which pioneering might have become a habit--the kind of habit which, if persisted in, would of course be alien to the sort of stable economic order which Tate and Lytle claim to admire. Rhodam is saved finally from perpetual pioneering by the prosperity of his grain plantation in Tennessee, but the fact remains that the vision of going "on and on to new land"¹⁷³ tempted him for a time. Since the seaboard planter's monopoly of the best land¹⁷⁴ is among the things which start Rhodam on his quest, we may infer that Tate might conceivably view such behavior on the part of planters as one of the "forces" that have "disrupted all settled forms of life in America."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 9.

¹⁷² Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 98.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 108, 98.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁷⁵ In the summer of 1933, Hound and Horn announced in its "Notes on Contributors" that Tate was finishing a book, to be entitled Ancestors of Exile, which was to be a study of the "forces that have disrupted all settled forms of life in America." (See Hound and Horn, VI [July-September, 1933], 560.) The book never appeared. Probably "The Migration" is a by-product of Tate's research for the projected, but never published, Ancestors of Exile.

The fact that Rhodam's trek West begins at the site of a deserted Episcopal church (the narrator tells us that there were many such churches in Virginia and the Carolinas at the end of the eighteenth century)¹⁷⁶ is perhaps a symbolic detail in which we (though not the Scotch-Irish narrator) are supposed to see adumbrated a connection between the instability which might plague even an agricultural society and the society's lack of a single firmly established and unifying religious dogma. Indeed, if the story which Tate's narrator, Rhodam Elwin, tells is regarded not from Rhodam's limited point of view but from the historical vantage point which Tate and Lytle sometimes assume in their nonfictional writings on Old Southern society--that is, from the vantage point of their imagined medieval age of feudal unity¹⁷⁷--we shall see Rhoda Elwin as confused about the significance of his discontent. Rhoda thinks that the forces which he hates can be summed up in the phrases "remains of feudalism" and "almost everything that is established."¹⁷⁸ If he shared Tate's and Lytle's historical perspective, he would, on the contrary, probably believe that it was the lack of a complete feudal establishment--social, economic, and religious--which unseated his forebears from their position as lairds in Scotland and which eventually

¹⁷⁶ Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 97.

¹⁷⁷ See pp. 63-71, 84, 166, 173, and 186-189 above.

¹⁷⁸ Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 86.

brought his father to the position of tenant (in Ireland) about to be evicted for debt at the time of his death.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, if Rhoda were endowed with Tate's and Lytle's particular brand of historical omniscience, he would probably think that it is the lack of the Catholic religion in eighteenth-century Virginia which makes the planter class seem onerous to other classes.

But in Rhoda Elwin, Tate has set himself the task of envisaging an advanced Protestant mentality--a man resembling up to a certain point those imaginary persons (in one of Tate's poems) who

Floating
Hating king and monk,
The classes and the mass,
. . . chartered an old junk

.
Unto the smutty corn 180
And smirking sassafras.

In keeping with Tate's willingness to couple the adjective "Protestant" with the adjectives "aggressive" and "materialistic"¹⁸¹ are some details by means of which Tate's narrator in "The Migration" (inadvertently, as it were) lets us see that of the two elements in his father's creed--"fear of God and honorable improvement of man's earthly estate"¹⁸²--the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁸⁰ Tate, "False Nightmare," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 57.

¹⁸¹ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 167.

¹⁸² Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 107.

second is at least as important as the first. At the same time Tate means ultimately to show that Rhoda's way of life is not inordinately acquisitive. This feat Tate accomplishes by a complex method. On the one hand, Tate provides his narrator with details which reveal (doubtless with intentional mild irony on Tate's part) Rhoda's willingness, at certain times and in certain respects, to imitate the methods by which the "classes" (the tobacco planters) have achieved their established position. Rhoda's planning (early in his career) to try to profit from tobacco himself,¹⁸³ his buying of slaves,¹⁸⁴ his ceasing to do rough work as he became more prosperous, his letting "niggers' work" and "all the kinds of work that each person was supposed to do" become "well defined,"¹⁸⁵ and his wife's insisting that her son Rhodam "must be a polished gentleman when [he] . . . grew up and be able to read the Classics"¹⁸⁶--all these details show us, in a gently ironic way, that Rhoda and his wife--for all their resentment of the established tobacco planters--are interested in establishing themselves as planters. In hands other than Tate's, their

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 87, 89.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 89, 97-98.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 96. Mrs. Elwin resents the fact that the school available in Virginia for her son is run by a certain Colonel Thornton. According to Rhodam, she senses that as an artisan her husband is not fully accepted by the Virginia landowning aristocracy. (In Scotland her people had been landowners.) Rhodam himself views the aristocratic Colonel Thornton as a "fine, generous, and dignified man who aroused in me both fear and respect." Ibid., p. 88.

story might become a satirical treatment of the acquisitiveness implicit in a slaveholding economy. But Tate is careful not to let the mild irony implicit in Rhoda's rise turn into satire directed at Rhoda or at slaveholding in itself. In the first place, Tate endeavors to redeem Rhoda's way of life in our eyes by letting the narrator stress the simplicity of the Elwins' life as compared with that of the tobacco-raising gentry and nouveaux riches.¹⁸⁷ In the second place, Tate glorifies Rhoda's economic morality by contrasting it with the economic morality of the nonslaveholding Pierces and Wilkersons (neighbors who become connected with the Elwins by marriage). Rhoda is presented as cherishing a suspicion of land speculators.¹⁸⁸ Apparently not wishing to profit inordinately from the sale of land, he sells the Pierces and Wilkersons land (from his Revolutionary bounty grant in Tennessee) at the price of twenty-five cents an acre. Twenty years later, in 1818, when Illinois is admitted as a free state, the Pierces and Wilkersons, "who never would buy a negro," prepare to migrate from Tennessee to

¹⁸⁷ For example, the narrator, Rhodam Elwin, comments as follows on the Tidewater gentry who come into Tennessee after men like his Scotch-Irish father have converted the Wilderness into a home: "Now [in the years before and after the war of 1812] the younger sons or the broken-down heads of the Tidewater families got into their coaches, and their ladies constantly in silk dresses and French shoes, drove politely into the new country to ruin that land also with tobacco." Of the ostentatious nouveaux riches who live in Nashville, Rhodam singles out for acid comment a family who in North Carolina were on a level with the Elwins but who "now [have] . . . a coach and four horses, and live . . . just out of town in a large brick plantation house amid a swarm of Negroes." Ibid., pp. 109-110.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

Illinois. The moral inferiority of these two nonslaveholding families to the slaveholding Rhoda Elwin is suggested by the following sentence showing that they are not averse to profiting from changes in the value of land: "These two families," says Rhodam, "in the summer of 1819 set out for Illinois, having sold their quarter-sections at a good profit to the tobacco planters, paying my father the original price of twenty-five cents an acre, and keeping the difference."¹⁸⁹ The episode manages to suggest that speculation, or profiting from the sale of land as the Pierces and Wilkersons do, is somehow worse than profiting from the ownership of people. Certainly it may not be said of Tate (as Robert Penn Warren has said of William Faulkner) that in his fiction (that is, "The Migration" and the novel The Fathers) he has depicted slavery as a curse on Southern society.¹⁹⁰ Tate's implied criticism, in "The Migration," of individual slaveowners is rather timid and is more than matched by his extravagant praise, in his nonfiction, of the pro-slavery ideologist, Calhoun. Furthermore, not only in "The Migration" but also in The Fathers, a "good slaveowner" is present to balance the "bad" (i.e., the acquisitive) slaveowner.¹⁹¹ The following conclusion may be drawn about "The Migration": despite the fact that Tate dramatizes in this story the manner in which certain qualities of some Southern planters might arouse resentment in certain other

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Penn Warren, "Cowley's Faulkner" [review of The Portable Faulkner, ed. Malcolm Cowley], New Republic, CXV (August 26, 1946), 235.

¹⁹¹ See pp. 414-420 of this dissertation.

members of society and despite the fact that a degree of aesthetic objectivity prevents him from greatly idealizing the relation between slave and master,¹⁹² Tate's picture of slave-owning planters in "The Migration" does not constitute a searching criticism of slaveowning as such.

Migration in the Nineteenth Century: The Desire to Get Ahead

As we have seen, in "The Migration" and Stonewall Jackson, Tate tends to picture pioneers in the eighteenth century as motivated by their lack of land--or, more particularly, their lack of good land. In contrast, the picture which he gives (in Jefferson Davis) of migration into the Lower South is one of immoderate desire to increase in wealth. The movement into the Lower South, says Tate, "differed from the earlier migrations into Kentucky, Illinois and the other prairie lands. The majority of the people were not driven from their former homes by lack of land or hard times; they were impelled by their desire to get on in the world."¹⁹³ The "capitalistic" underpinnings of the Southern "feudalism" are sometimes visible, it must be admitted, in portions of the account which Tate gives of the rise

¹⁹² Tate hints both at spiritual limitations in the relation between slave and master and at human bounties in that relation. On the one hand, Tate lets his narrator report that there was disagreement among the Southerners as to whether the Negroes had souls (though most Methodists--the narrator thinks--did attribute souls to Negroes). On the other hand, Tate does not miss the opportunity to show slave and young master enjoying fishing trips together. Ibid., p. 95.

For other brief comments on "The Migration," see pp. 116 and 348-349 of this dissertation.

¹⁹³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 32.

of the Lower South. Tate notes that the "opportunity of getting rich quickly" lured some people from the Northeast. He observes that some Virginia planters were led to migrate by the fact that, with "no growing demand for tobacco," their slaves had become an "embarrassment" in Virginia, whereas in the Lower South those slaves "could become the foundation of future wealth."¹⁹⁴ He says, too, that a large percentage of the new planter class in the Lower South was "made up also of people from Kentucky, Maryland, and Virginia" who were "ambitious for social advancement." "Social strata in the older sections" of the South, he points out, "were already well-established. A man, unless possessed of great personal distinction . . ."¹⁹⁵ was likely to remain all his life in the class in which he had been born. In the Lower South," Tate points out, "everybody was 'on the make.' The profits from one year's crop were often enough to set a man up as a planter, and to set him up in style. The term 'cotton snobs' came into vogue."¹⁹⁶

Writing some years before A. N. J. Den Hollander or Frank L. Owsley published studies emphasizing that the majority of the rural white population in the Old South were yeomen subsistence

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

¹⁹⁵ In Virginia, Tate says (as if to soften the harshness of the idea that men were likely to remain in the class into which they were born), "great personal distinction" often "meant merely education." Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

farmers rather than "poor whites,"¹⁹⁷ Tate assumes in his Jefferson Davis that the plantation was more nearly typical of the "ultimate purposes" of the Lower South than was the cotton farm.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, Tate specifically states at one point in Jefferson Davis that though the migration to the Lower South was prompted by the desire of those in older states to "get on in the world,"¹⁹⁹ a hardening of social strata was speedily accomplished in the new states. Speaking particularly of southern Mississippi around 1815 and thereafter, but indicating that it was typical of at least some other areas of the Lower South, Tate describes the quick metamorphosis from frontier to stratified society:

The stage was set here [in southern Mississippi], as elsewhere in the Lower South, for the rapid stratification of society under the influence of King Cotton. The lowlanders, getting rich in the cotton industry, were to be a powerful squireocracy made almost over night; the [settlers in the "unfertile pine-barrens" of Pearl River county] . . . , less fortunate in having come too late, or less enterprising, were to be at best small farmers, at worst (the majority) "poor whites." 200

Whether deliberately or inadvertently, in his Jefferson Davis Tate makes remarks suggesting that sheer acquisitiveness was a prominent force in the shaping of Lower Southern society. In

¹⁹⁷ Den Hollander, "The Tradition of 'Poor Whites,'" Culture in the South, ed. Couch, pp. 405, 413; Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," Journal of Southern History, VI (February, 1940), 24-45; Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (1949).

¹⁹⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 61.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

words which would probably be annoying to Owsley today,²⁰¹ Tate depicts some of the "'piney woods'" people as a class "whose right to their barren waste lands was not likely to be disputed by acquisitive planter or Federal agent."²⁰²

Not only are the "'piney woods'" people shown by Tate almost as fugitives from the acquisitive planters, but some of the more fortunate of the common people are shown as would-be imitators of those planters. The social harmony which Tate describes between planters and the "'hill billies' or 'crackers' of northern Georgia and parts of Alabama" will not, to the liberal eye, appear to be the product of any spiritual unity between those two groups. This harmony will seem to the liberal to be the product of materialism and political manipulation. Perhaps echoing William E. Dodd, Tate says that many of the farmers of these areas were

poor relations of the rich merely waiting until they had accumulated enough money to buy a tract of land and a few slaves to set themselves up as planters. Their relations with their wealthier neighbors were friendly. The planters were not far enough removed from poverty themselves to be undemocratic in their manners; and besides these people [the farmers] had

²⁰¹ Owsley's review of Tate's Jefferson Davis, at the time of its publication, was very favorable. See Frank L. Owsley [Review of Jefferson Davis, by Allen Tate], Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (March, 1930), 570-572.

²⁰² Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 36.

the vote. The planters were already entertaining dreams of great political power. 203

Such a passage as the one just quoted from Tate's Jefferson Davis scarcely bears out T. S. Eliot's view of the Old South, given in Eliot's paraphrase of one of the points of I'll Take My Stand. "The old Southern society, with all its defects, vices and limitations, was still in its way a spiritual entity," says Eliot (echoing with evident approval what he conceives to be a contention of I'll Take My Stand).²⁰⁴ In contrast to the organization of Old Southern society, Eliot suggests, the "organization" of twentieth-century society is "wholly materialistic."²⁰⁵ Tate's picture of Lower Southern farmers waiting to get enough money to set up as planters and of planters

203 Ibid. The context of this passage does not make clear what years Tate is discussing. We may guess that he is referring particularly to the 1830's, though part of his description would also apply to the 1840's and 1850's.

William E. Dodd's description of the relations between planters and farmers of these areas differs from Tate's chiefly by virtue of Dodd's implication that the time was coming when conditions in the Lower Southern plantation society would no longer be such as to save that society from a divisive materialism such as afflicts modern industrial society. In other respects, Tate's picture of the "hill billies" and "crackers" resembles Dodd's picture of the farmers of the hills. Compare ibid. with Dodd, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 31.

204 [Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, X (April, 1931), 483. Eliot's loose use of the term "spiritual" may be compared with Ransom's use of the term when he says that the "peculiar institution of slavery . . . gave a spiritual continuity to [the South's] . . . many regions." John Crowe Ransom, "The Aesthetic of Regionalism," American Review, II (January, 1934), 303.

205 [Eliot], "A Commentary," Criterion, X (April, 1931), 483.

(but recently graduated from poverty themselves) keeping on good terms with their poorer neighbors for political reasons will strike the liberal as a picture of behavior which is no less materialistic than is the behavior of twentieth-century businessmen, professional and white-collar workers, and industrial workers.

In contemplating points such as those cited in the two preceding paragraphs from Tate's Jefferson Davis, we may feel that Tate's picture of the Cotton Kingdom is entirely incompatible with his generalizations, in Jefferson Davis and elsewhere, about the Old South's "comparative stability" and its "realistic limitation of the acquisitive impulse."²⁰⁶ The expansion of the Cotton Kingdom is a topic which produces considerable confusion in Tate's writings. The migration into the Lower South, as we have just seen, Tate represents as a movement to "get on in the world."²⁰⁷ As such, we might suppose that Tate, if he were faithful to his vision of the Old South as standing for "a stable spirit of ordered economy,"²⁰⁸ would unequivocally condemn the cotton aristocracy (and would-be cotton aristocracy) for their inordinate exploitation of nature, if not of human labor. But the tendency of at least some of Tate's principles to criticize the scramble for wealth in the Lower South is moderated, apparently, by Tate's belief that the Cotton Kingdom was

²⁰⁶ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 275. See also Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

²⁰⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 32.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 301.

essential to the South's attempt at independence: evidently Tate thinks that secession, followed by the Confederacy's determination not to be coerced back into the Union, would not have occurred, had it not been for the "enormous fortunes" made in the Cotton Kingdom.²⁰⁹ By a feat more of sheer will power than of intellect, Tate has managed to hold in solution in his brain two incompatible convictions: the conviction that some of the "great Southern ideas" were "strangled in the cradle . . . by too much quick cotton money in the Southwest"²¹⁰ and the conviction that the South would have done better in the Civil War crisis to follow some "man of conviction" who could see into the "real motives" of the "[n]ew" and "expansive" Lower South--those motives being (in Tate's words) the Lower South's intention of pushing towards an "empire, agricultural, slaveowning, aristocratic."²¹¹ Apparently because of his feeling that the world would be better had the South made good its independence under some such "man of conviction," Tate is forbidden the luxury of an easy and single-minded preference for nonslaveowning subsistence farmers or even for the planters of mid-nineteenth-century Virginia--planters who were, by his own account, far less acquisitive than those who had recently been on the make²¹² in the

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

²¹⁰ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 270.

²¹¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 19. See also pp. 24-25, and 27.

²¹² Ibid., p. 105.

"[n]ew and expansive" Lower South.²¹³ Evidences of Tate's desperation in his attempts to bridge the gaps between his practical instincts and his avowed ideals are his inconsistent implications about Lower Southern imperialism. At one point he emphasizes that the Virginians--who had been reluctant to go out of the Union--were "backward-looking and contented to rest upon a mellow classicism" and that they "had no sympathy with the Lower Southern dream of a great empire."²¹⁴ This statement makes the Lower South sound very imperialistic indeed. But elsewhere Tate maintains that the Lower Southern planters withdrew in 1860 "not primarily to realize their imperialism" but to "perpetuate a stable and deeply rooted way of living, which, they foresaw, the restless industrial society of the North would gradually exterminate."²¹⁵ Tate's Jefferson Davis asks us to accept on faith a metamorphosis in Lower Southern society--a metamorphosis of expansiveness and acquisitiveness²¹⁶ into contentment with a "modest conquest of nature."²¹⁷ The metamorphosis, Tate at one point implies (though he scarcely demonstrates it), had already

²¹³ Ibid., p. 19.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

²¹⁶ For Tate's descriptions of the acquisitiveness and expansionism of the Lower Southern planters, see especially the following pages: ibid., pp. 32-33, 36, 38, 47-48.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 301. John Lincoln Stewart calls attention to Tate's contradictoriness in regard to the South--particularly Tate's contradictoriness as to whether the Lower South was expansive and acquisitive or devoted to stability. See Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," pp. 264-265.

begun by 1850;²¹⁸ the continued development of the South (including the aggressive, expansive Lower South and Southwest) toward a stable feudal culture was cut short, Tate implies in Jefferson Davis, by the Civil War.²¹⁹ Evidently it was a metamorphosis so sudden and imperceptible that Tate forgets, upon occasion, that he has said it had taken, or was taking, place.²²⁰ Such inconsistencies as this on Tate's part are apt to confuse or irritate the liberal (or any other) reader. But the principal irritation which the Southern liberal will feel with Tate's picture of the Cotton Kingdom arises, not from the incredible rapidity of the shift which Tate claims the Cotton Kingdom made from acquisitiveness and expansiveness to stability, but from Tate's evident attraction to the Southern patriotism of the violently pro-slavery politicians of the Lower South (Calhoun, William Lowndes Yancey, and Robert Barnwell Rhett)²²¹ and to the characters of the Lower Southern founders of the Confederacy. Not only does Tate conclude his book with generalizations as to the entire Old South's contentment with taking "only what man needs" from nature,²²² but also he inserts from time to time

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

²¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 301-302.

²²⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 19.

²²¹ See Chapter IV and pp. 363, 397^m of this dissertation for an analysis of Tate's admiration of Calhoun and Rhett. Compare Tate's loving picture (p. 336 of this dissertation) of the men present at the Confederate founding convention with the picture given by Hamilton James Eckenrode: "Every type of the South may be seen, but a large proportion of the faces are high-bred and even noble. They are full of character and intellect." Hamilton James Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis: President of the South (New York, 1923), p. 2. *Italics mine.*

²²² Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

specific images suggesting that the Lower Southern planter was, ultimately, a man of high moral character whose way of making a living is not to be thought of as evil. Tate takes pains to present a favorable picture of the character of those Lower Southern planters who participated in the Confederate Constitutional Convention at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1861. Apparently as he looks at the men gathered there, Tate can see no sign of the interference of their "material occupation"²²³ with their moral life: "In nearly all their faces," says Tate,

there was an expression of simple repose combined with a kind of astuteness [E]very one of them looked upon the world with an austere benevolence; in the long, bony features of the "slave-power" played a high-bred disinterestedness, even a kind of simple nobility. Above the rest, Howell Cobb, the presiding officer, . . . surveyed the Convention with an air of utter casualness Cobb's drooping eyes, a little puffy, his long hair and full beard, joined in an expression mixed of quizzical cunning and innocence. He was master of a town of Negroes, more than a thousand; one of the largest slaveholders in the South; "the sum of all evil." If a barely imaginable abolitionist could have witnessed the scene, he might have felt a slight contradiction between the "sum of all evil" and the character of the men who represented it; nor could he have argued with much conviction, as Charles Francis Adams did when he took his son Henry to Mt. Vernon, that here was the exception; there were too many men not to make the rule. ²²⁴

In these words Tate (who has insisted that the twentieth-century capitalist's way of making a living is almost inevitably amoral, if not immoral)²²⁵ subtly suggests that the slaveowners of even

²²³ The quoted phrase is from Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 741.

²²⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 19.

²²⁵ See pp. 87-88 of this dissertation for quotations from Tate, "A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 739.

the Lower South were as a rule characterized by a "high disinterestedness, even a kind of simple nobility."²²⁶

Western Subversives

Turning his back on the opportunities for probing the "subversive" acquisitiveness of the Lower South, Tate singles out the Union-minded politicians of the Upper South--Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and James K. Polk--as symbols of forces which ran counter to his own ideal feudal image of the Old South. By representing these aggressive Upper Southwestern politicians as antithetical to his idol, John C. Calhoun, Tate manages to reinforce his image of Calhoun's pro-slavery ideology as based upon an essentially nonexploitive, relatively non-acquisitive attitude. Furthermore, as we shall see, by concentrating his attack on the materialism of these Upper Southwestern politicians--politicians who did not actively devote themselves to pro-slavery propaganda--Tate has diverted attention from the materialism implicit in the pro-slavery ideology of the Lower Southern secessionists, William Lowndes Yancey and Robert Barnwell Rhett.²²⁷

Andrew Jackson is made by Tate and Lytle into a symbol of internal forces which interfered with the establishment of stable classes of plain farmers in the Old South. If we read

²²⁶ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 19.

²²⁷ See pp. 338ff, 351-353, 356-366 of this dissertation.

Tate's and Lytle's invidious remarks on Jackson, we may well be puzzled by Herbert Agar's attempt to identify the Vanderbilt Agrarians, in a lump, with Jacksonian democracy. In an obvious effort to dissociate the Vanderbilt Agrarians from the tradition of the large slave-supported plantation, Agar emphasizes that these writers "worked together in Jackson's Nashville" and that they were "in touch with the agrarian tradition which from the beginning has formed the mind of the Mississippi Valley--not the tradition of the great plantations and mint juleps, as found in Southern romance," but the "tradition of Jacksonian democracy, of the farmers who pushed the West across the mountains."²²⁸ Actually, both Tate and Lytle have unkind things to say about Jackson and the tendencies which they believe he fathered. Not only do they point out that Jacksonian wealth was tainted with speculation in land. They also object, apparently, to his presumed espousal of the doctrine of social equality. More specifically, as we shall see, their anathema upon Jackson seems to spring from their belief that he held up to the masses the ideal of getting ahead by acquiring more money.

In Tate's view, Jackson exemplifies Western instability. Viewing Calhoun as "the Christ," Tate finds it "just possible to see . . . Andrew Jackson as the . . . Antichrist of political order in the United States."²²⁹ In a paragraph distinguished for its vigor and its remarkable transitions, Tate declares that Jackson "struck the first hard blow against Southern society

²²⁸ Agar, "Free America," Free America, I (January, 1937), 2.

²²⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 38.

[which stood for stability], by suppressing the Act of Nullification in South Carolina"; that Jackson "as a Westerner, hated everything in the East"; that "Jackson had been born in South Carolina," but that "South Carolina, except for the fact that there were a great many Democratic votes there, meant no more to him than Massachusetts"; and that Jackson "had an instinctive hatred of gentlemen." Evidence of Jackson's "instinctive hatred of gentlemen" is, according to Tate, the fact that "his dying words evinced a good deal of hate for Calhoun."²³⁰ We gather that in Tate's opinion Jackson was ungentlemanly because he "hated wealth if it brought leisure, and he hated institutions, by means of which a society devotes its leisure to culture."²³¹

Not only does Tate despise Jackson for the negative sin of gentleman-hating; he also comments pejoratively on Jackson's positive contribution to the degradation of American democracy. That positive contribution is the "fiction of social equality"²³²--a dogma for which neither Tate nor Lytle renders Jackson praise. Social equality--which, according to Tate, is something that never has existed and ought not to²³³--appears

²³⁰ Ibid. That Tate can scarcely credit even the report that Jackson had "'gentle and considerate'" manners is suggested by his making gentle fun of Jefferson Davis for setting down this impression of Jackson fifty years after he had seen him. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 59.

²³¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 38-39.

²³² Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 233.

²³³ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 424. Cf. Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 9-10.

in Lytle's writings as a trick played on the common man to make him want to get rich instead of remaining satisfied with a plain farmer's modest independence. Lytle seems to say that discontent was sown in the farmer's breast by Jackson's acts and creed. After remarks deploring John Taylor's economic alignment of himself with the propertyless artisan and clerk, Lytle declares:

The appearance of Andrew Jackson, the land speculator, as the leader of this rootless democracy both of country and city, clarified the issue in the next quarter of the century. He came forward as the defender of the plain man, the little man everywhere in the Union; but his defence was that the little man might have an opportunity to grow rich, to exploit the riches of the wilderness as well as the Eastern financier. Although in the South and West there was a social democracy behind him, he must bear his share of blame for reducing this democracy to the state of landless tenants and helpless workers in mill and office. 234

In his essay "The Hind Tit," Lytle's remarks on Jacksonian democracy--and their context--provide a peculiarly amusing variation on his refrain in praise of a contented yeomanry. Lytle maintains in this essay that Jackson, "demanding for the talented obscure the chance to grow rich and distinguished, expressed [the new planters' and the would-be planters'] . . . demands politically" and that "Jacksonian Democracy was, therefore, no Democracy." Contrasted with the bad, or false, democracy of Jackson is the good, or true, democracy of Jefferson--which, according to Lytle, envisaged a "self-sufficient republic of freeholders" and which "did not contemplate any such leadership" as Jackson's.²³⁵ (Apparently Lytle is not thinking, for the

²³⁴ Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 97. Italics mine.

²³⁵ Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 209.

moment, of the liberal principles which, he says elsewhere, led Jefferson and John Taylor to oppose those institutions and separate estates which would have helped to build a traditional society.)²³⁶ Jacksonian democracy, as pictured by Lytle in "The Hind Tit," is the platform of pushing, materialistic upstarts. On the loud assertions of Jacksonian democrats eager to become strong men themselves (or to act as if they already were), Lytle makes this wry comment:

"Down here, men like me and General Jackson and Colonel Davy Crockett always demands our rights; and if we don't git 'em, somebody is mighty liable to git Hell" is not the assertion of one contented to live easily and at peace on a fifty-acre steading.²³⁷

If we took Lytle's remarks on Jackson out of their context in "The Hind Tit," we might conclude that Lytle is perhaps after all a thorough-going anti-materialist and that he loves only the modest farmer who tends to his own business on his fifty acres. But we are spared any such suspicion--for in the very next paragraph Lytle celebrates the ruling class--the planters--who had risen in much the manner that Jackson had. As we shall note again in our examination of Lytle's Bedford Forrest, Lytle apparently has no particular aversion to the "strong men" who "accumulate great estates"--they have "striven mightily,"²³⁸ he says. In fact, Lytle insists that the ruling class of the Lower South, Tennessee, and Kentucky was established by such mighty

²³⁶ See pp. 108, 136, and 166 of this dissertation.

²³⁷ Lytle, "The Hind Tit," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 209.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

striving; and he laments not the rise but the demise of this ruling class of planters: "The South, and particularly the plain people," Lytle moans, "has never recovered from the embarrassment it suffered when this class was destroyed before the cultural lines became hard and fast." In Lytle's opinion, apparently, the real villainy is involved not in the rise of such a planter class, but in its indoctrination of the masses with the urge to get ahead. In other words, what Lytle seems to deplore is the fact that the Civil War intervened before the "strong men" of the Southern plantations, having established themselves as a ruling class, could set up as the permanent leaders of the yeomanry. We are thus confronted with an amusing paradox (or confusion) in Lytle's thinking: Jacksonian democracy is defined by Lytle--and is then labelled undemocratic; but in the same breath, Lytle puts his stamp of approval on the strong men who came up in exactly the way which he says was prescribed by Jacksonian ideology. Evidently Lytle would admire a society whose ruling class of planters never counselled the yeomanry to rise as they themselves had risen and whose yeomanry had been miraculously purged of the sort of economic aspiration which had originally motivated the rise of the ruling class. It is entertaining to note that Calhoun's "Feudal Aristocracy" receives gentler treatment from Lytle than Jacksonian democracy does. When Lytle alludes to Calhoun's thought, he does not pause to contrast it invidiously with Jefferson's.²³⁹ He does not bother

²³⁹ Ibid., pp. 209-210.

to point out that Jefferson's ideal "self-sufficient republic of freeholders"²⁴⁰ did not contemplate leadership by a "feudal aristocracy"--nor does he note that Jefferson's ideal republic included no such servile base as that upon which Calhoun's ideal republic rested.²⁴¹

That Lytle's anti-Jacksonianism is perhaps motivated more by dislike of the common people's desire for "store-bought" things than by disapproval of the "strong man's" love of material possessions is ironically suggested by his double standard for planter and small farmer. Lytle regrets the passing of the planters for, he says, so long as the South had its gentleman-planters for "defenders" the "peddlers made no great headway."²⁴² We will be wrong if we think Lytle means that the planter by refusing to buy manufactured goods set a good example for the lower classes. Apparently Lytle feels that the planting aristocracy could itself buy "freely from England and the North"²⁴³ without disqualifying itself as "defender" of the small man against the corruptions held out by the "capitalists and their merchandise."²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ This is the phrase Lytle uses when he contrasts Jacksonian democracy, invidiously, with Jeffersonian democracy. Ibid., p. 209.

²⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 209-210.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 243.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 208.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 243.

Further confirming our view that Andrew N. Lytle is no real antimaterialist, so far as the upper classes are concerned, is his contempt for the planter who (reversing the process which Lytle attributes to Andrew Jackson) voluntarily gives up his riches to become a yeoman farmer. If, according to Lytle, it is true that the rich man (Andrew Jackson) who tempts the masses of subsistence farmers to desire wealth is a subversive, it is equally true (according to Lytle) that the well-to-do planter who forsakes prosperity to assume the role of yeoman is a subversive.

Lytle's hatred of the "subversive" whose egalitarianism is expressed in an act of renunciation comes out in his comment on the family of Rives Allard, a character in Caroline Gordon's novel None Shall Look Back. Garret Allard (Rives's great-grandfather), after establishing himself as a prosperous tobacco planter, had "quit raising tobacco" in his old age ("thinking it wrong to pander to what he considered a vice"). First he had planted his land in mulberry trees and raised silkworms--a product for which there was no factory market. Meanwhile, he had been "mightily concerned about his negroes" and had sent a "lot of them back to Africa." Finally he had "sold out his land" in the tobacco country on the Kentucky border and had "gone down to north Georgia, where he had settled on "poor, washed-out land" in the piney-woods country."²⁴⁵ Nothing could more conclusively

²⁴⁵ Caroline Gordon, None Shall Look Back (New York, 1937), p. 17. The description is given from the point of view of Fontaine Allard, who belonged to a branch of the family that had remained as substantial planters in the tobacco country on the Kentucky border.

exhibit Lytle's belief in a clearly defined and tacitly accepted class structure than the contempt he pours upon Garret Allard and his descendants who continue Garret's policy of doing good to others and taking for their own support only so much as they actually need.²⁴⁶ That Rives's mother should share her dessert with a man who is elderly and ill,²⁴⁷ that she should take her good sofa to one of the Negro cabins for the use of the old and rheumatic Aunt Dolly,²⁴⁸ that she should insist that her sons work in the fields with the Negroes²⁴⁹--these are the peculiarities of the "eccentric" Mrs. Allard. If to the uninitiate they seem remarkably like the virtues of the Agrarians' frontier farmer (or the subsistence farmer who does not aspire to a rich material life), those of us who have followed Mr. Lytle through the pages of the American Review will not be surprised to read the scathing criticism which Lytle turns upon this apparently well-meaning woman, whose sin is her

²⁴⁶ For a description of the charitable inclinations of Rives's parents, see ibid., pp. 19-20, 171-173, 214; for descriptions of the frugality and simplicity of his family's life, see ibid., pp. 20-21, 355-356.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

disregard of the proprieties of "place and degree."²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Lytle, "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image," Sewanee Review, LVII (Autumn, 1949), 579. Lytle's curious novel A Name for Evil gives him an opportunity to examine the sins of an Old Southwestern planter who, in a manner different from Garret Allard's, violates what Lytle would doubtless call the proprieties of place and degree. The planter's chief economic sins (as he is presented in the novel) are his working his own sons at the same grinding pitch of efficiency at which he works his slaves and his pridefully attempting to wrest the maximum yield from his land and then to annihilate himself and his "place" (i.e., his plantation and his role in society)--rather than passing on his "place" to his children. In surrealistic tones, Lytle (through his narrator) depicts the old planter's willing that his land produce no more crops and his sending his sons away with only hirelings' pay. See Andrew [N.] Lytle, A Name for Evil (Indianapolis, 1947), pp. 23-24, 66-69, 98, 100, 101.

A strange aspect of the novel A Name for Evil is the fact that its narrator, young Henry Brent (a Poesque writer who is trying to "regenerate a family place [The Grove] and make up for the failure in trusteeship of those who had gone before"), is greatly attracted to the image of the thriving plantation as it was in its "heyday" under Major Brent, the same Old Southwestern planter whose refusal to give his place to his sons is viewed by the narrator as an index of pure evil. Young Brent's lament that servants can not be maintained at The Grove in the twentieth century reflects his nostalgia for The Grove's pre-Civil War social organization. This nostalgia leads him to attribute "hospitality" and "gracious living" to a place which--if we believe his reports on old Major Brent's character--could never have possessed those civilized qualities in old Brent's time. See Lytle, A Name for Evil, pp. 30, 23-24, 66-69, 98, 100, 101, and 39-41. Young Brent's envious remarks on the ante-bellum plantation (on pp. 39-40 of A Name for Evil) embody assumptions closely akin to Lytle's own views on the desirability of separate estates and on the virtues of the self-sufficient ante-bellum plantation. See pp. 196 and 222 of this dissertation. Or see Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 99; and Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 431-432. Lytle has chosen to place some of his dearest "traditionalist" views in the mouth of young Henry Brent, a man who because of circumstances and flaws in his character not only fails to "regenerate" The Grove but causes the death of his pregnant wife. Perhaps Lytle thinks that he has made a tragedy out of his record of young Henry Brent, a writer whose principles are "traditionalist" but whose impulses are insanely egotistical. It is doubtful, however, that a gentleman as sententious and as mad as young Henry Brent can justly be viewed as a tragic figure.

Having expressed his opinion that the Georgia Allards are an "eccentric branch of the family," Lytle launches into the following judgment upon them:

The eccentric is the subversive element in a tradition, because his freedom is self-willed. Freedom in an ordered state is the freedom of the will and depends upon responsibility defined by place and degree. Self-identity is always realized out of the friction among the complex relationships of a well-determined whole. The self-will of the eccentric destroys this identity. Ideologically the abolitionist is such a person. The eccentric ancestor of Rives gave up raising tobacco to go off to the gullied country of North Georgia . . . to raise mulberries for silk-worms. The family may seem to recover from such an internal betrayal . . . ; but the defection persists and spreads [Rives's mother], always concerned with other people's business to the neglect of her own, is the symbol of this, as socially she is the counterpart to the Abolitionist.²⁵¹

Lytle might add that, in his mythology, the eccentric members of the Allard family, by stooping to equate themselves with the lowly in society, become the counterpart of the "subversive" Andrew Jackson, who promised to raise masses of men to his own social and economic level.²⁵²

The picture of Andrew Jackson as a plebeian who got rich too quick and who devoted his life to holding out to the common man chimerical promises of a success like his own is given a "philosophical" formulation by Arthur Styron, whose

²⁵¹ Lytle, "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image," Sewanee Review, LVII (Autumn, 1949), 579-580. Lytle makes an insignificant factual error. Actually Garret Allard began raising silkworms before he went to north Georgia. See Gordon, None Shall Look Back, p. 17.

²⁵² Cf. Styron, The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy, p. 149--the passage cited on p. 348 of this dissertation.

biography of Calhoun has interesting relationships to the writings of Tate and Lytle.²⁵³ Looking at Jackson from the viewpoint of the East, Styron characterizes his career and his nature as follows:

To the seaboard aristocracy the picture of the young Jackson who had set out from Hillsboro North Carolina to Nashville on a race horse, packing a brace of duelling pistols (but no sword), trailing a pack of hunting dogs, and conveying his one slave (a girl), was an amusing one of a back-country dandy; and though he had established himself in politics as a nabob, he remained an egalitarian who, merely reversing the Puritan concept of reducing all to the level of the common people, would raise all to the level of aristocracy.²⁵⁴

Styron's unfavorable picture of Jackson, as seen by the seaboard aristocrat, is paralleled by Tate's fictional portrait of Jackson as seen by a Scotch-Irish immigrant who is a fugitive from the seaboard aristocracy. In Tate's short story, "The Migration," the narrator reports that his father, a Scotch-Irish immigrant who had worked his way to America, and who had made several moves in this country to escape from the isolation to which an aristocratic society assigned him, disliked Andrew Jackson. The grounds of the immigrant's dislike were, possibly, his general suspiciousness of land speculators,²⁵⁵ and, more certainly, his opinion that Jackson was a "man who did one thing and talked another, and who was

²⁵³ See pp. 175-177 of this dissertation.

²⁵⁴ Styron, The Cast-Iron Man: John C. Calhoun and American Democracy, p. 149.

²⁵⁵ See Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 103.

in all respects above his raising."²⁵⁶ Thus, though Tate's Scotch-Irish immigrant--who started out as a cabinet-maker and finally became a grain planter--is himself no lover of the seaboard aristocracy, he shares that aristocracy's contempt for the too-quickly rich Jackson, who had come to Tennessee "in broadcloth, without a penny in his purse."²⁵⁷

To summarize: in Tate's and Lytle's portraits of Jackson, it is just possible to see adumbrated the irresponsible speculator who promises that since all men will have a chance to become what he has become, we are on the royal road to democracy. Jacksonian democracy, according to Tate, actually provided the first materials from which the plutocracy constructed a rationalization of its power in this country:

Jacksonian democracy stopped with the fiction of social equality that is, it made no real effort to secure equality of economic opportunity to the people. Economic inequality and the fictitious character of social equality provided the first step of American capitalism to rationalize its power. Working with the reality of economic disparity, capitalism made secure the doctrine of social equality, and fought on that basis the War between the States, which finally consolidated its power.²⁵⁸

Apparently Tate sees Jacksonian democracy as the forerunner of the modern democratic-plutocratic myth which, in his opinion,

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 109. "The Migration" does not make clear whether Rhoda Elwin, who lives only until 1820, is basing his judgment of Jackson on the advocacy of social equality which is a feature of the later Jacksonian period. Rhoda does not specify what Jackson "talked."

²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 89, 109.

²⁵⁸ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 233.

"lull[s] the people into believing that it [is]. . . still possible for any man to rise to a foremost position as a distributor of loot; that is, become a capitalist."²⁵⁹ Tate's tirade against Jackson as a middle-class preacher of social equality has affinities with Arthur Styron's castigation of the middle-class reformer. The middle-class reformer, says Styron, spreads the insidious doctrine of egalitarianism in a society which might otherwise become a stable agrarian paradise. The natural society, according to Styron, is a society made up of an aristocracy and a peasantry "whose aims and sympathies are common." Into this ideal society, between whose "higher and lower order" there are (says Styron) only perfect accord or beneficent tensions and interplay, "breaks the blatant note of the preacher of Equality, the Puritan middle-class reformer, disturbing the rational order of life by sowing the seeds of discord and discontent." As Styron pictures him, this serpent--the "preacher of Equality"--wishes to destroy aristocracy and to "tyrannize over the common people by the pretext of making them see with their own (the reformers') eyes, baiting them with materialistic and political sops: in a word, preaching equality to destroy classes in order to recreate a tyrannical middle class of Marxian self-negation."²⁶⁰ Tate's Andrew Jackson, like Styron's middle-class preacher of Equality, might have appeared in Ancestors of Exile (a book which Tate projected but never published) as one of the "forces that

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Styron, "Shall We Have an Aristocracy?" American Review, IV (November, 1934), 6-7.

have disrupted all settled forms of life in America."²⁶¹ Tate and Lytle--partly because they cannot forget that Jackson was the antagonist of their idol, Calhoun, in the Nullification controversy²⁶²--see Jackson as a subverter of the Southern establishment.²⁶³

The twentieth-century liberal may sympathize with certain elements in Tate's and Lytle's distrust of Andrew Jackson, the man. The true liberal will not, for instance, approve of Jackson the land speculator.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, the liberal will repudiate as unworthy of admiration certain elements in the ideology which Tate and Lytle attribute to Jackson and the Jacksonian tradition. No more than Lytle does the liberal conceive the end of society to be giving the "little man the

²⁶¹ See Hound and Horn, VI (July-September, 1933), 560.

²⁶² Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 38; Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 524.

²⁶³ Robert Penn Warren's use of a Jacksonian figure as the spiritual ancestor of his loathsome businessman in the novel At Heaven's Gate suggests that in Warren's mythology (as in Tate's) Jackson epitomizes a restless and brutal spirit. See the concluding paragraphs of Robert Penn Warren, At Heaven's Gate (New York, 1943).

Unlike Tate, Owsley and Davidson apparently think Jackson is a useful symbol for some of the (to them) good qualities of Southwestern frontier agrarianism. See the following references for generally favorable treatment of Jackson: Donald Davidson, The Tall Men (Boston, 1927), p. 14; Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, pp. 175, 266; Frank L. Owsley, "The Making of Andrew Jackson," American Review, I (April, 1933), 220-225. But see also Davidson's criticism of Jackson in Davidson, The Tennessee, I, 256-258, 308.

²⁶⁴ See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1946), pp. 36-37, 43-44n.

opportunity to become rich."²⁶⁵ (In fact the liberal would be in favor of more egalitarian standards than presently exist in matters of health, comfort, and convenience.) Nor does the liberal, any more than Tate, wish to propagate the dream that "any man . . . [can] rise to a foremost position as a distributor of loot; that is, become a capitalist."²⁶⁶ At the same time, the liberal will greatly distrust Tate for the manner in which he sets Calhoun up as a godlike alternative to the devilish Jackson.²⁶⁷ The liberal will note that Calhoun, the gentleman, sanctions slavery as the means by which men may become, and stay, relatively wealthy. He will suspect that Calhoun's philosophy provides no effective criticism of even the "enormous fortunes"²⁶⁸ founded on slavery in the Cotton Kingdom. And he will ponder over why Tate has not seen fit to speak as disparagingly of the social philosophy of Lower Southern politicians as he has of Jacksonian democracy. Drawing part of his ammunition from Tate's own account of Lower Southern society, he will inquire why Tate did not label as a would-be

²⁶⁵ The quoted phrase is from Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 97.

²⁶⁶ The quoted phrase is from Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 233.

²⁶⁷ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 38.

²⁶⁸ The quoted phrase is from Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 30.

"distributor of loot"²⁶⁹ the small farmer who looked forward to accumulating enough money to "buy a tract of land and a few slaves" and to "set [himself] . . . up as a planter."²⁷⁰ Are the profits from slave labor somehow too respectable to be called loot? the liberal will inquire. Are such profits likely to be the product of moral behavior, whereas profits from speculation in land are certain to be the product of immoral behavior? And is the allegedly Jacksonian doctrine of social equality inherently less productive of well-being in society than is the doctrine of racial castes which Lower Southern society, by Tate's own account,²⁷¹ vigorously upheld?

Even more dangerous than Andrew Jackson, so far as the future of the Old Southern establishment was concerned, was Henry Clay, according to Tate and Lytle. In their history, Clay appears in the role of parvenu who, though he had in externals become the aristocrat, was at heart even less the

²⁶⁹ The quoted phrase is from Tate's invidious description of the mentality fostered, in part, by the Jacksonian heritage. See Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 233. Had Tate wished to probe the relations of Jacksonian democracy to Lower Southern acquisitiveness, he might have tried to explain why William Lowndes Yancey, the Lower Southern fire-eater, considered himself a Jacksonian. See John W. Du Bose, The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey (Birmingham, 1892), p. 112.

²⁷⁰ The quoted phrases are from Tate's description of reasons for some of the small farmers' lack of hostility toward slavery. Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 36.

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

"country gentleman" than was Andrew Jackson.²⁷² In Lytle's opinion, Clay represented the "dependency of his section upon the economic imperialism of the East."²⁷³ Lytle sees this dependency of commercial agriculture upon the manufacturing Northeast as the tragic flaw of Kentucky. Clay made capital of this dependency; and thus Clay--who was (in the words of Tate's poem) reputedly of "poor-white stock of Hanover" (Virginia),²⁷⁴ who had "left Virginia for the New Day/(Kentucky)," and who had acquired in Kentucky a "ruffled shirt" and a "gilded coach"²⁷⁵--becomes, in Lytle's eyes, an example of the "unscrupulous and rootless foreigner" whose "ambition quickly sense[s]" the "odor of decay" and who, "for his own purposes, seizes upon the weak features of any given order."²⁷⁶ Clay's

²⁷² Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 524-525.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 524.

²⁷⁴ Tate uses (though he does not commit himself upon the accuracy of) the myth of Clay's background of poverty. See p. 355 of this dissertation for the full text of Tate's poem entitled "On the Great Conciliator: Now Honored in the Old Dominion," Sewanee Review, XXVIII (Winter, 1930), 20.

Bernard Mayo provides entertaining data puncturing the myth that Henry Clay's youth was one of poverty. The Clays of colonial Virginia were "prosperous yeomen farmers, of the upper middle class," Mayo points out. On the maternal side, Clay came of a family of "substantial planters." Clay's father had not only a five-hundred-acre plantation and twenty slaves, which he got from his wife's family in Hanover County (Virginia), but also "another slave-worked plantation in neighboring Henrico" County. Bernard Mayo, Henry Clay: Spokesman of the New West (Boston, 1937), pp. 12-13, 2, 4.

²⁷⁵ Tate, "On the Great Conciliator: Now Honored in the Old Dominion," Sewanee Review, XXVIII (Winter, 1930), 20.

²⁷⁶ Lytle, "John C. Calhoun," Southern Review, III (Winter, 1938), 525.

compromises undermined the true Southern social order, composed of genuine country gentlemen (with their dependents) and various levels of yeomen or peasants--the order which Lytle apparently sees as the end toward which the Southern feudalism should have moved.

Clay's role in the subversion of the South is epitomized by Tate in a brief poem entitled "On the Great Conciliator: Now Honored in the Old Dominion":

'Tis said the Honorable Henry Clay
Was poor-white stock of Hanover,
And left Virginia for the New Day
(Kentucky) where the strong men were:
A ruffled shirt and a gilded coach,
Along with ambition, changed their mind--
At least the Virginians now are kind.
Such was the sting of their reproach.²⁷⁷

In one respect, the meaning of Henry Clay's rise, as presented in this poem, differs from the meaning of his rise as sketched in Lytle's prose: Tate's poem, unlike Lytle's vignette, admits of the possibility that the aristocratic Virginians' condescension toward so-called "poor-white" men like Clay may have been a force behind Clay's urge to improve his social and economic status. Thus the "sting" of these ante-bellum Virginians' "reproach"--that is, the effect of their contempt for the man referred to as "poor-white"--eventually boomerangs so that the descendants of the old Virginia aristocrats are themselves fooled by the purely external success of Clay. In honoring Clay, these latter-day Virginians embrace the incarnation of

²⁷⁷ Tate, "On the Great Conciliator: Now Honored in the Old Dominion," *Sewanee Review*, XXXVIII (Winter, 1930), 20. See footnote 274 on p. 354 of this dissertation for an account of Clay's family background.

the very forces that killed the older aristocratic Virginia, for though they do not realize it, Clay the Conciliator was Clay the Destroyer, and the present Virginians are either the princes or the intellectual slaves of the plutocracy that Clay helped to create. Tate seems to enjoy drawing a picture of the ironical revenge of Henry Clay on the eighteenth-century Virginia aristocracy. The reader of Tate's historical writings may enjoy a further irony: in Jefferson Davis, Tate rejoices that after 1850 Lower Southern society was becoming "stable" and that it produced a "genuine ruling class" made up of men "bound by their responsibility to a definite physical legacy--land and slaves";²⁷⁸ thus Tate seems to have put his stamp of approval on the Lower South's production of just such a fixed ruling class of planters as presumably provoked Henry Clay to leave Virginia.²⁷⁹

A third politician whose action Tate sees as exposing the Old Southern social order to danger is James K. Polk. Polk's sin,

²⁷⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 55.

²⁷⁹ If Tate should insist that by 1850 the Lower Southern planters were quite unlike the eighteenth-century planters who oppressed the small farmer, it might be pointed out that Tate's friend Andrew N. Lytle attributes the difference largely to the spread of negro slavery in the nineteenth century: with the "rise of cotton and the spread of negro slavery into the West," says Lytle, the "planter ceased to be the small farmer's oppressor as in Colonial days. The conditions had changed. He had now an alien race to serve him." See Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 422-423. (See also p. 167 of this dissertation, for the context of the foregoing quotation.) The liberal reader of Lytle would, of course, consider the enslavement of an "alien race" a high price to pay for an end to the oppression of the small white man.

like that of Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay, is, first of all, that he opposed Calhoun. Calhoun, as we have already mentioned, did not wish to go to war against Mexico in 1846 because, for one thing, he foresaw that the territories which might be acquired from Mexico would exacerbate the sectional struggle between North and South and that these territories would in the end become free states. Tate, in his anxiety to prove the inferiority of Polk to Calhoun, makes the following criticism of Polk for provoking hostilities in 1846:

President Polk was a myopic Southern politician who failed to see that the acquisition of western lands was not precisely the way in which the South could maintain a balance of power with the North. . . .

Polk was an imperialist; a not very intelligent imperialist. The revolutionary party in the North would never permit American society to expand in terms of the Constitution. The North with respect to history and all decent traditions was wrong. . . . Polk had simply not been very intelligent. Instead of slaves in the new Western States to count as two-thirds their number, there would be white men, counting all three-thirds, to vote down southern rights in the East.²⁸⁰

Several points may be made about Tate's attitude here toward Polk. In the first place, Tate implies that Polk's end was maintaining the South's power in the Union even if he was deluded about the means. Actually, according to Polk's diary, Polk--no less than Calhoun--privately stated in 1846 that slavery "would probably never exist" in the provinces of New Mexico and Upper

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Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 37, 39-40.

and Lower California.²⁶¹ The second point to notice is that though Tate calls Polk an imperialist--which is usually not considered a nice name--there is no indication in this passage that Tate sees anything morally wrong in the extension of slavery. In fact, Tate implies that it was a revolutionary act to prevent the expansion of slavery within the territory of the United States. A third point about Tate's attitude toward Polk's supposedly pro-Southern imperialism is the fact that by a questionable implication about the motive for Polk's imperialism Tate unintentionally contributes to a distrust which the Southern liberal is likely to have of certain Southern politicians of the 1840's and 1850's. (The liberal may not be aware that, contrary to Tate's implication, Polk's imperialism was not pro-slavery in motivation.) Does Tate present other Southern politicians of this period--especially the politicians of the Lower South--as inordinately and unintelligently imperialistic? the liberal may inquire. And is he as hard on the pro-slavery propagandizing imperialists as he is on Polk? The answers to these questions must be as complicated as is Tate's account of the Lower South in his biography of Jefferson Davis.

At certain points in his biography of Jefferson Davis, Tate presents the Lower Southern planters and politicians as unquestionably imperialistic. The following passage from Tate's

²⁶¹ Entry of December 19, 1846, in The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency, 1845 to 1849, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago, 1910), II, 283-284. This passage in Polk's diary has been cited by William E. Dodd and others.

Jefferson Davis suggests (rather recklessly) that expansionism was practically universal among Lower Southern planters and politicians during the twenty or thirty years prior to the Civil War:

The planter class, enjoying a perfect leisure under the slavery regime, devoted their energies to politics--which meant, after 1830, imperialistic expansion. The Mexican War had added New Mexico and California, and extended the Texas boundary to the Rio Grande. They dreamed of a great empire that would embrace, eventually, all of Latin America. The history of Congress after 1840, until 1860, is one bitter struggle of the Southern politicians to gain the preponderance of power which would enable them to direct the politics of the country in the interest of their imperialistic dream.²⁸²

Furthermore, Tate gives some details, not only on Jefferson Davis's support of Polk in the Mexican War, but also on Davis's use of his position as Secretary of War (under Pierce) to promote Southern expansion. Davis used his power in the cabinet for certain "far-reaching ends," Tate tells us:

His greatest aim was Southern expansion into Mexico or Cuba or Central America. He consistently supported the filibustering in Cuba and Nicaragua, and he might have gained Cuba if he had known more about diplomacy Another plan almost succeeded. Davis had James Gadsden appointed to buy the southern ends of New Mexico and Arizona. The land was worthless--to everybody but Davis, who intended to use it as part of the route of a transcontinental railroad connecting California with the South by way of Vicksburg.²⁸³

²⁸² Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 47-48. The context of this passage suggests that Tate is speaking primarily of politicians in the Lower South or the Cotton Kingdom.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 80. Unlike Tate, Robert McElroy alludes to Davis's interest in Cuba and in transcontinental railroads in such a way as not to make them seem appendages of Davis's Southern sectionalism. See Robert McElroy, Jefferson Davis: The Real and the Unreal (New York, 1937), I, 145, 151-152.

Of Davis's letting himself be duped by Stephen A. Douglas into supporting "squatter sovereignty," Tate goes so far as to say: "Davis thus helped to bring on the South the disastrous experiment of trying to hold its own in the territories; the failure of this effort may be said to be the direct cause of the Civil War."²⁸⁴ If we read only the foregoing excerpts from Tate's writings, we might conclude that, although he oversimplifies his picture of Calhoun and somewhat distorts the portrait of Polk, he seems ready to set up a picture of Lower Southern politicians (with the exception of Calhoun) as slavocratic expansionists whose imperialistic acquisitiveness must bear an important share of the blame for the precipitation of the Civil War. But other statements in his biography of Jefferson Davis prevent our reaching such a conclusion. These other statements-- in which Tate pictures the South as a "conservative check upon the restless expansiveness of the industrial North"²⁸⁵--suggest that Tate simply cannot make up his mind whether the planters and politicians of the Lower South were imperialistic or whether they were contented with the "deeply rooted,"²⁸⁶ "modest conquest

²⁸⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 80. Eckenrode, whose biography is one of those cited in the biographical note at the end of Tate's Jefferson Davis, also emphasizes how Davis was duped by Douglas. Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, pp. 76-77. Eckenrode seems to regret the fact that Southern expansion into the tropics was thwarted by the Civil War. Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301. Tate is probably not referring primarily to territorial expansion, but surely imperialism, such as Tate claims animated the Lower South in the 1840's and 1850's, is a kind of "expansiveness."

²⁸⁶ The quoted phrase is from ibid., p. 48.

of nature"²⁸⁷ which they had achieved by 1861. At one point in Jefferson Davis, immediately after having sketched vividly the imperialistic dreams of those planters between 1830 and 1860, Tate makes the following declaration:

When Abraham Lincoln was elected on a platform of no quarter to the slavery expansionists, the planters prepared to leave the Union. But not primarily to realize their imperialism: they withdrew to perpetuate a stable and deeply rooted way of living, which, they foresaw, the restless industrial society of the North would gradually exterminate.²⁸⁸

For this opinion that the planters' primary motive for seceding was a desire to protect a "stable and deeply rooted way of living," Tate offers at this point not a shred of evidence. Earlier in Jefferson Davis (as we have already mentioned), he pictures the "motives of the Lower South" in 1861 as more imperialistic: "New and expansive, unbound by strong local tradition, the Lower South was gradually pushing towards an empire, agricultural, slave-owning, aristocratic,"²⁸⁹ he says. After exposure to Tate's diverse accounts of the Southwestern planter and politician, we may ask a desperate question: does not Tate demand more than ordinary credulity--or schizophrenia--of us, his readers? Do not his equivocal reports on the erstwhile dynamic, yet miraculously stability-loving Southwestern planters and politicians show him to be primarily a myth-maker (in the

²⁸⁷ The quoted phrase is from ibid., p. 301.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 48. See Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," pp. 264-265, for comment which anticipates that made here on the discrepancies between some of Tate's remarks on Old Southern acquisitiveness and stability.

²⁸⁹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 18.

perjorative sense of the term) rather than a fact-finder? And does not Tate's attack on Polk betray his impulse to find a scapegoat in the Wilderness (the West)--a scapegoat upon whose back may be loaded sins of which the Lower Southern fire-eaters--Robert Barnwell Rhett, William Lowndes Yancey, and others--were also guilty? In proportion as Tate cumbers the expansionist Polk with blame, he lessens the burden of guilt which some previous writers, in assessing the causes of the Civil War, have placed upon the shoulders of such violently pro-slavery secessionists as Rhett and Yancey.

Indeed, so far as Tate's attitude toward Southern imperialism is concerned, it looks very much as if Tate reserves his disapproval for the stupidity or naïveté of certain Southern politicians (e.g., Polk before 1850 and Davis after 1850) who gave their energies to schemes for expansion within the Union.²⁹⁰ For Rhett, Yancey, and Toombs--to whom he alludes as the "three prophets of Southern imperialism"--Tate evinces no such distaste as he exhibits in his handling of Polk. In 1861, Tate implies in a complicated statement, these three "prophets of Southern imperialism" were "representative of their society" in the "best sense": they would have tried to lead public opinion in the

²⁹⁰ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 37, 38-39; Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 79-81.

direction which they saw as right.²⁹¹ Elsewhere, Tate maintains that Rhett was "rightly and bitterly disappointed at his failure of the presidency."²⁹² Unlike Jefferson Davis, who fruitlessly devoted himself in the 1850's to schemes for Southern expansion within the Union, Rhett and Yancey (says Tate) recognized by the fifties that the South, so long as she was part of the United States, would not be permitted to extend her institutions. Tate takes pleasure in noting this mark of the two prime fire-eaters' intelligence: "[o]nly the extremists like Yancey and Rhett knew that the South could expand no farther,"²⁹³ Tate announces. It is perhaps indicative of Tate's own fire-eating temperament that he does not set down and reprove Rhett's and Yancey's public actions and statements suggesting that the South should be allowed to expand--actions and statements which, we may suspect, helped to arouse the same kind of hostility against the South as did the Mexican War and the pro-Southern efforts of Jefferson

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 27. The liberal will find Tate's handling of Yancey not merely unrealistic but downright inaccurate. Apparently desiring to suggest that the "'Secession Plot'" was the action of "a whole people," Tate says that in 1860 "Yancey, who had whipped up opinion for secession for twenty years, now had so little effect on the action of his state that the people did not even elect him to their secession convention." (Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 9-10.) Actually, Yancey was elected to the Alabama secession convention; in fact, he "dominated the proceedings" of that convention and "penned the ordinance of secession" which that convention adopted. See Dwight L. Dumond, "William Lowndes Yancey," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, XI (New York, 1936), 545.

²⁹² Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 85.

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 81. Tate's attitude toward Rhett is the same as Hamilton James Eckenrode's. Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, p. 66.

Davis. Tate conveniently fails to record such specific details as the fact that Rhett and Yancey "ardently voted" for the Mexican War in the 1840's,²⁹⁴ that in the 1850's Yancey was treasurer of a fund for Jefferson Buford's company which "set out to settle in Kansas for the advancement of the Southern cause there,"²⁹⁵ and that a statement made by Yancey as late as 1859 indicated his anger at the North's following a policy calculated to make the expansion of slavery unlikely.²⁹⁶ Nor does Tate bother to report to us Rhett's statement in July, 1859, that the "territorial issue . . . was a practical one because it involved the fate of Southern expansion--the mission of the South to expand

²⁹⁴ Du Bose, The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey, p. 198.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 289.

²⁹⁶ William Lowndes Yancey to James D. Meadows, June 16, 1859, as quoted in ibid., pp. 387-388: "'The assertion that this Douglas heresy is a mere abstraction is itself fraught with significance. It is an acknowledgment that past legislation as to the Territories as a whole has been disastrous to the South, and has so operated upon her fears and upon the sensitiveness of her slave property, that she will be kept from making further effort to organize Territorial governments favorable to her policy; and thus it will never again be a practical question whether a slave State can be admitted into the Union! What a sad comment upon the condition of the South! Manacled and robbed, she is exhorted to be quiet, for lost rights are but as spilt milk!'"

over the tropics of the western hemisphere."²⁹⁷ The latter statement ought to be enough to discredit Rhett in the eyes of any person who, like Tate, professes to believe that the Southern cause was the cause of a "stable spirit of ordered economy" and contentment with a "modest conquest of nature."²⁹⁸ Certainly there is nothing modest about a vision of expansion "over the tropics of the western hemisphere."²⁹⁹ The most obviously "stable" element in Rhett's vision here was his unquestionable assumption that slavery would continue to be the way of the South. Tate's willingness to entertain the idea that Rhett should have been president of the Confederacy³⁰⁰ must be to the twentieth-century Southern liberal one of the disturbing aspects of Tate's thought. Such a disposition on Tate's part may well make the Southern liberal wonder whether Tate's criticism of Polk's imperialism is grounded upon a hatred of pro-slavery imperialism or merely upon expediency. Perhaps it is because Rhett's efforts

²⁹⁷ Robert Barnwell Rhett's speech in Grahamville, South Carolina, as paraphrased in Laura A. White, Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession (New York, 1931), p. 154. Referring to this remark by Rhett, Miss White (who is doubtless the foremost authority on Rhett) says that Charles W. Ramsdell's article maintaining that slavery had reached its approximate limits by 1860 may "cast doubt on the statesmanship of Northern leaders but scarcely discredit[s] Southerners who were determined to preserve their 'civilization.'" Ibid. Miss White cites Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (September, 1929), 151-171.

²⁹⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

²⁹⁹ Rhett as quoted in White, Robert Barnwell Rhett, p. 154.

³⁰⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 85.

were concentrated on provoking the South to seek independence³⁰¹ that Tate does not feel the urge to reprove him for his imperialistic statements.

How shall we summarize Tate's attitude toward imperialism in the Old South? Although his inconsistencies make generalization difficult, we may guess that the gist of his attitude can be summed up in the two following principles: attempts to expand slavery were bad (i.e., stupid and ill-advised) when they were based upon the assumption that the North would allow such expansion within the United States after the Mexican War; on the other hand, those who agitated at the time of the Mexican War and thereafter for slavery expansion within or beyond the territorial limits of the United States are not to be labelled bad leaders for the Old South provided that, in the end, their agitation was (in Tate's opinion) subordinated to the objective of secession and a separate identity for the South with its "stable and deeply rooted way of living."³⁰²

³⁰¹ Laura A. White notes that Rhett's primary concern was with secession and that in the 1850's "he resolutely refused to be diverted even by projects with which he was fundamentally in sympathy, such as annexation movements and the revival of the African slave trade." Laura A. White, "Robert Barnwell Rhett," Dictionary of American Biography, XV (New York, 1935), 527.

³⁰² Only the quoted phrase is taken from Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 48. Documentation for the remainder of this assertion appears in the preceding pages of this dissertation. The assertion is based partly on inferences drawn from Tate's generally favorable handling of Rhett in the following passages: Tate, Jefferson Davis pp. 10, 24-25, 27, 81, 85, 93, 95.

V. DEFENDERS OF THE SOUTHERN FEUDALISM
JEFFERSON DAVIS, STONEWALL JACKSON, AND BEDFORD FORREST

As we have just seen, Tate attempts to identify some subversive forces which ran counter to the Old South's tendency to develop into a stable, relatively non-acquisitive society. These forces, as characterized by Tate, are the speculator and advertiser of social equality (Andrew Jackson), the parvenu (Henry Clay) who sold out to industry and commerce, and the expansionist (James K. Polk) who put the South under a cloud by making it look as though it were hungry for more and more new slave lands at a time when the North was in no mood to let slavery "expand in terms of the Constitution."³⁰³ We turn now to Tate's and Lytle's accounts of three men upon whom fell a heavy share of the responsibility for defending the social structure of the South in the crisis of the Civil War--the social structure which both Tate and Lytle admire as a kind of feudalism. These three defenders, whose biographies Tate and Lytle have chosen to write, are Jefferson Davis, Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, and Bedford Forrest. We shall now inquire how Tate's and Lytle's images of class and race in the Old South are related to their portraits of these three figures.

Before analyzing Tate's portraits of Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson and Lytle's portrait of Bedford Forrest, we may remind ourselves of the picture which Tate and Lytle give of late ante-bellum Southern society when they wish to

³⁰³ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 40.

distinguish its essence from that of ante-bellum Northern society or modern American society. Forgetting both the imperialism of James K. Polk and the Lower South and the aggressive materialism of Southwestern "subversives" (such as Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay), Tate and Lytle maintain that the South was, by the time of the Civil War, essentially a "feudal culture, fast becoming static"³⁰⁴ or "stable";³⁰⁵ and they strongly imply that the South's feudal aristocracy³⁰⁶ or "plantocracy"³⁰⁷ was the force permitting the preservation of the European tradition--a tradition which Tate characterizes as a "stable spirit of ordered economy."³⁰⁸ According to Tate, we may recall, the Old South stood for "conservative Fundamentalist Christianity" and "civilization, based on agrarian, class rule, in the European sense." The issue in the sectional struggle was "class rule and religion [for which the South stood, according to Tate] versus democracy and science

³⁰⁴ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 28.

³⁰⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 55.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 301-302.

³⁰⁷ Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 422. This passage is quoted on p. 167 of this dissertation.

³⁰⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

[for which, Tate apparently believes, the North stood]."³⁰⁹

Although Tate (as well as other Vanderbilt Traditionalists) betrays an anger against Northern Abolitionists and slavery restrictionists which suggests that he does consider Northern anti-slavery activities justified Lower Southern secession and united Southern resistance to the North's attempts to suppress secession,³¹⁰ some direct statements by these Vanderbilt Traditionalists deny that slavery was the cause of, or the issue

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 87. Cf. Hamilton James Eckenrode's interpretation of the Civil War. According to Eckenrode, the "Civil War was, in essence, a struggle between that part of the Nordic race which was prepared to renounce its tradition of mastery for equality, modernism and material comfort and that part of the race which was resolved, despite modernity, to remain true to its ruling instincts Industrialism won in the Civil War, and industrialism is as un-Nordic as agriculture is Nordic [The Confederacy] was a Nordic protest against a leveling age, against the principle of leveling. There was democracy in the South, but it was the democracy of conquerors. There was no brotherhood with the weak. The South discovered democracy and repudiated it Slavery de facto . . . survived war, reconstruction, humanitarianism, democratic propaganda--everything, until industrialism came to the South. Then it died When the blacks became factory hands and mill workers alongside white men, they ceased to be slaves and became a part of the great industrial class [The] labor unionists [are the] main menace of the future, [with their] communistic organization [which they offer as the alternative to Nordic institutions]." Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, pp. 21, 18, 359-360, 364.

³¹⁰ See Section VII of the present chapter of this dissertation --the section entitled "The External Challenge: Abolitionism."

in, the "irrepressible conflict."³¹¹ At the same time, as we have already seen in Chapter IV of this dissertation, Tate and Lytle in some of their accounts of the virtues of Old Southerners state that the relation of master to slave in the Old South was

³¹¹ Tate, "Where Are the People?" American Review, II (December, 1933), 237; Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 300-302; Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 13; Donald Davidson [Review of Faith for Living, by Lewis Mumford], Free America, IV (October, 1940), 19; Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 73, 74, 76, 77. Owsley is not quite coherent in his account of the role played by slavery in the sectional struggle. On the one hand, he insists that the "irrepressible conflict . . . was not between slavery and freedom, but between the industrial and commercial civilization of the North and the agrarian civilization of the South"; and he maintains that slavery "was no essential part of the agrarian civilization of South" and that without slavery "the economic and social life of the South would not have been radically different." On the other hand, he announces that because "slaveholding was the acid test as to whether a state would remain agrarian or become eventually industrial, the Northern leaders wished that no more slave territories should be carved from Western territories." This latter statement implies that the establishment of slavery, at least for a time, was an essential element in the firm establishment of agrarian civilization in a state. (*Ibid.*, pp. 74, 76, 77.) Another of Owsley's articles says that the "argument . . . finally adopted as the real justification of secession in 1860" was the argument that "the South and East were two distinct economic and social systems, and above all, perhaps, profoundly different in race, now that the North had taken into its bosom so many millions of people of non-English races and the South had retained its almost purely British character." (Owsley does not show any awareness that the South's claim to a "purely British" character was rather ridiculous in view of the large African element in the South.) See Frank L. Owsley, "Abolition and Secession," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (July, 1935), 464-465. Owsley's account of the avowed reasons for secession conflicts sharply with the statement of E. Merton Coulter in his recent study of the Confederacy. The conflict between Owsley's statement and Coulter's is all the more striking because of the fundamental agreement between Coulter and Owsley as to the war guilt of the North and the value of Old Southern civilization. Says Coulter: "South Carolina in her secession declaration . . . made the North's interference with slavery her greatest grievance, and the subject . . . appeared equally large in other seceding states." E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 ([Baton Rouge], 1950), p. 8.

one respect in which Old Southern society retained "feudal" virtues which made it superior to modern industrial society.³¹² Accordingly, the accounts which Tate and Lytle give of the relation of Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Bedford Forrest to their property, human and non-human, bear significantly upon the question of why Tate and Lytle consider these men to have been suitable or unsuitable defenders of the Southern feudalism.

The Feudal Bond or the Cash Nexus?

Different from each other as Jefferson Davis, Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, and Bedford Forrest are, the most obviously "feudal" trait which they share springs from their acquiescence in the institution of slavery. In their accounts of these three men, Tate and Lytle capitalize upon the opportunity to present slaveowning in an ingratiating light. Apparently delighting in the feudal paternalism of these Defenders as slaveowners, Tate and Lytle fail to mention, do not fully recognize, or gloss over certain respects in which these slaveowners resemble modern "commercial" man. They also minimize or omit mention of some unpleasant attitudes of these men as slaveowners.

Tate paints a glowing picture of the behavior of Jefferson Davis and his elder brother Joseph Davis toward the slaves on their plantations. This picture is one which in much of its detail is authenticated by the historians Walter Lynwood Fleming

³¹² See pp. 216-224 of this dissertation. See also Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 167.

and Robert McElroy;³¹³ therefore, the liberal's objection to Tate's picture is not that Tate's concrete facts are false. Rather, the liberal's objection is that some of Tate's conclusions are misleading. Speaking of Jefferson Davis's use of a Negro overseer, of Davis's employment of a jury system whereby delinquent slaves were disciplined by their fellow slaves,³¹⁴ and of Davis's willingness to let his slaves earn money,³¹⁵ Tate by deliberate or careless statements implies that there were many masters as good as Davis. When he wishes to emphasize that Davis's Negroes, who were "singled out [after 1865] as examples of the talent of their race for citizenship," had "acquired their talent as slaves," Tate admits that the Davis brothers "introduced . . . reforms" into the slave system--the word "reforms" implying that the Davis system was not typical.³¹⁶ Elsewhere, however, Tate implies that the Jefferson Davises were atypical planters only in the fact that they were absentee planters.³¹⁷ Furthermore, Tate suggests at another point in his discussion that there were

³¹³ Walter L. Fleming, "Jefferson Davis, the Negroes, and the Negro Problem," Louisiana State University Bulletin, 6th series, no. 4 (October, 1908), pp. 3-5; McElroy, Jefferson Davis, I, 39-40.

³¹⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 71.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 72. Tate seems to have no objection to the cash nexus between master and slave.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

³¹⁷ "The Jefferson Davises were good planters, but they were not typical planters; though their system had all the virtues and none of the vices of the slavery regime. For, even before their marriage, Jefferson Davis had actively entered politics, and they were not, from now on, to be much at home again." Ibid., p. 77.

"thousands" of planters like the Davis brothers. Ambiguously remarking that "[n]o slavery system is good simply because it involves slavery," Tate declares that "in the hands of the Davis brothers and thousands like them it entailed more responsibility than abuse."³¹⁸

More misleading than Tate's implications as to the number of masters who were "like" the Davises is Tate's omission of all details on Davis's opinion about the inferiority of the Negro. Tate does not consider it of interest to mention any of Jefferson Davis's statements to the effect that the Creator had given the Negro a nature inferior to that of the white man.³¹⁹ Nor does he mention any of the businesslike arguments which Davis gave for the expansion of slavery.³²⁰ Tate's omission of this aspect of Davis's personality means that the reader misses seeing a certain hardness in Davis's personality--a hardness of which the reader must be aware if he is to evaluate properly Davis's handling of his own slaves and his feeling, when the South's situation had become desperate late in the war, that slaves might be armed and might even be given their freedom.³²¹

Although Tate calls attention to the fact that the Lower Southern planters, including the Davis brothers, were largely a class of nouveaux riches³²² and although he admits that Joseph

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

³¹⁹ See McElroy, Jefferson Davis, I, 40.

³²⁰ Ibid., pp. 104-105, 132-133, 198.

³²¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 278.

³²² Ibid., p. 33.

Davis (Jefferson Davis's older brother) had "prospered beyond measure,"³²³ Tate gives no hint that Joseph Davis was so wealthy as to be considered a millionaire and one of the richest men in the United States prior to the Civil War.³²⁴ It would be awkward for Tate to point out that Joseph Davis and other planters made up a large proportion (considering the smallness of the Southern population) of the wealthy men of the nation.³²⁵ It would be embarrassing to Tate to admit this, for he has concluded his biography of Jefferson Davis with a sweeping claim that the Old South (by which he seems to mean chiefly the planters) was "contented to live upon a modest conquest of nature, unwilling to conquer the earth's resources for the fun of the conquest; contented, in short, to take only what man needs; unwilling to juggle the needs of man in the illusory pursuit of abstract wealth."³²⁶

The one unflattering touch which Tate does permit himself to include in his portrait of Jefferson Davis's relation to slaves is the account of Jefferson Davis's objection, as a boy, to working in his father's cotton fields--an objection based upon young Davis's dislike of the "'implied equality' with the field

³²³ Ibid., p. 52.

³²⁴ Burton J. Hendrick, Statesmen of the Lost Cause: Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet (Boston, 1939), p. 29. According to Hendrick, by 1835 Joseph Davis's fortune was "popularly assessed at one million dollars." If this assessment was correct, says Hendrick, Joseph Davis was one of the richest Americans. Ibid.

³²⁵ According to Hendrick, there were "more wealthy men in the Southwest from 1840 to 1860 than in the East and North." Ibid., p. 27.

³²⁶ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

hands."³²⁷ Tate's remarks here and in his portrait of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson suggest that Tate disapproves of a snobbish condescension toward manual labor--particularly agricultural labor.³²⁸ Tate's apparent approval of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson's working alongside the Negroes in his garden³²⁹ will suggest to the liberal reader that of possible forms of slavery Tate perhaps prefers one which does not imply that the work done by the slave is demeaning in itself. Unfortunately, Tate's picture of Jackson laboring with the Negroes may confirm the unthinking conservative reader in a feeling that Old Southern slavery was good because it was capable of providing a closer, more humane relation between owner and laborer than modern industrial capitalism has made possible.

Other details that Tate gives about Stonewall Jackson's dealings with Negroes are apparently intended to emphasize further the humanity and even the spirituality of Jackson's relation to his own slaves (he owned only one or two at a time) or to other Negroes. Tate stresses Jackson's great concern for the Negroes' spiritual welfare--a concern exemplified in his setting up a

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

³²⁸ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 52. See Tate's attack on the Humanists (Irving Babbitt et al.) for their alleged failure to recognize that a man who is doing manual work may be doing "moral" work at the same time. Tate, "Humanism and Naturalism," Reactionary Essays, p. 123. See also Davidson, "The Tall Men," Lee in the Mountains, p. 86.

³²⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 52.

Negro Sunday School.³³⁰ He notes that Jackson bought one slave to "get him out of the hands of an unworthy master." And he observes that Jackson's slaves were members of his family.³³¹ This latter statement may contain a truth which Tate does not intend to convey. In view of Jackson's stern attitude toward even his own adored baby girl³³²--an attitude which Tate does not mention--Jackson's treating his slaves as though they were members of his family would not necessarily mean that he treated them as much more than animals to be conditioned into a state of submissiveness. Another detail which Tate omits from his account of Jackson's relation to his servants suggests that, contrary to Tate's implications, Jackson felt that Negroes belonged to a species which must be appealed to through nonspiritual means. This detail, not

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 92. Evidently it does not occur to Tate that Jackson with his Negro Sunday School might be providing a rationalization of the "secular ambition" of Southern slaveowners. (I have used for my own purposes, here, Tate's invidious characterization of the Protestant religion--a religion which he does not, however, specifically link with the Southern slave labor system. See Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 168.)

³³¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 53. The analogy of the family, as used by defenders of Old Southern slaveholders' treatment of slaves, will to the liberal seem patently fallacious. Obviously no slave is really a member of the owner's family--if he were, he would cease to be a slave.

³³² See Burke Davis, They Called Him Stonewall (New York, 1954), p. 398.

mentioned by Tate, concerns Jackson's rather mean-minded way of training his servants.³³³

On another matter relating to Jackson's attitude toward slaves, Tate also maintains an interesting silence. This is the matter of Jackson's fear of servile insurrections³³⁴ and his apparent belief (in 1861) that if a rupture did develop between North and South it would be due to the North's "'peculiar notions of slavery.'"³³⁵ Instead of calling attention to and criticizing Jackson's hysterical and bigoted notions in regard to the supposed threats to the continuation of slavery, Tate merely states that Jackson's "view of slavery was always that of the orthodox Virginian, or of any respectable citizen of the border states"--that is, he "had always believed that the slaves should be free," he "didn't know how it could be done," and "he knew it could not be done quickly."³³⁶ Then Tate proceeds to present Southern fears of Northern Abolitionists and the Republican Party as if those fears were absolutely justified. It never seems to occur to Tate that Southerners could have initiated constructive plans for

³³³ According to Jackson's wife, "'When a servant left a room without closing a door, he [Jackson] would wait until [the servant] . . . had reached the kitchen and then call him back to shut it, thereby giving him extra trouble, which generally insured his remembrance next time. His training made the colored servants as polite and punctual as that race is capable of being.'" Anna Jackson, as quoted in Davis, They Called Him Stonewall, p. 130.

³³⁴ Davis, They Called Him Stonewall, p. 133.

³³⁵ Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, as quoted in ibid., p. 133.

³³⁶ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 40. Tate seems to recognize that Jackson's own brand of "abolitionism" did not represent any very strenuous thinking. See ibid.

gradual emancipation, to answer the Abolitionist agitation. Instead of a critical appraisal of the blind adherence of Jackson and other Southerners to the status quo in slavery, Tate gives his readers a vigorous rationalization of the South's defiance of both Abolitionists and Lincoln.³³⁷ The net result of Tate's handling of slavery in his biography of Stonewall Jackson is the communication of the ideas (1) that the institution gave scope to responsible and benevolent behavior, whereas the free industrial labor system being developed in the North would not³³⁸ and (2) that Southerners were right in not allowing the Abolitionists to give them a guilty conscience about slavery. (The latter point will be discussed in Section VII of this chapter.)³³⁹

Not only will the liberal reader feel that Tate has been overly flattering in his picture of Stonewall Jackson's attitude toward Negroes. The liberal will also observe that Tate has suppressed, or remained ignorant of, a significant fact about Jackson's non-human property. Tate fails to note that in the 1850's Jackson owned six shares of stock in the Bank of the Commonwealth of Virginia.³⁴⁰ Tate's reason for omitting mention of this fact "may be a subject of dispute, but at the same time

³³⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-14, 25, 55-57, 60-61. See also pp. 399-400, 435, 437-438, 442, 444, and 454 of this dissertation.

³³⁸ See pp. 216-218 of this dissertation for a discussion of Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 39-40.

³³⁹ See Tate's tirades against the Northern Abolitionists; Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 25, 55-58.

³⁴⁰ Davis, They Called Him Stonewall, p. 113.

it is an object of suspicion."³⁴¹ Jackson's ownership of bank stock would, if Tate mentioned it, detract from Tate's attempt to identify Jackson with the typical Old Southerner--who, according to Tate, had no conception of, or desire for, "meta-physical wealth" or wealth "as numerical operations that are no longer symbols but intrinsic values of themselves." Suggesting that the only kind of wealth the Old Southerner understood or desired was a "collection of physical objects,"³⁴² Tate emphasizes the nearly cashless self-sufficiency of the frontier domain on which Jackson grew up.³⁴³ Tate must find it quite disconcerting if he knows that the mature Jackson bought bank stock--a form of property over which (according to Tate's economic ethic) moral control cannot, as a rule, be exercised.³⁴⁴ By failing to know or failing to report Jackson's involvement with corporate wealth, Tate preserves the image of Stonewall Jackson

³⁴¹ The quoted phrase is from Tate's comment on the relation between the abolitionist agitation and the Northeast's desire for a high tariff. Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

³⁴² Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 12.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁴⁴ See Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 80-93.

from what is, by Tate's standards, an economic blemish.³⁴⁵

Because of the manner in which he deals with the economic behavior of Bedford Forrest, Andrew N. Lytle's biography of Forrest is perhaps the most sustained piece of unconscious irony to be found in the writings of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists. Lytle claims that Forrest--who rose from backwoods farming to large-scale planting--was the "most typical strong man of the Agrarian South"³⁴⁶ and the "most typical, the greatest, leader [the South's] . . . feudalism . . . fashioned."³⁴⁷ In view of the fact that Forrest's wealth was accumulated through horse trading, slave trading, real estate selling, and other "bourgeois" activities,³⁴⁸ it must be observed that Lytle unintentionally makes a mockery of the terms "feudal" and "Agrarian," which he and Tate have rather consistently tried to use to designate non-bourgeois and, to them, admirable qualities in the Old South.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Tate does not, however, fail to note that Cummins Jackson, Stonewall's uncle, "[ran] off after gold in '49" and "died in the West." Cummins Jackson, the sporting frontier gentleman with 10,000 acres and only ten or twelve slaves--the kind of gentleman whom Tidewater Virginians called a "yeoman" because he worked with his hands and because everybody on his place, including the family, worked--is apparently Tate's concession to the possibility that even an Old Southerner whose domain was largely cashless and self-sufficient was capable of being corrupted by a yearning for "metaphysical wealth." It seems almost as if Tate, in propitiation for the sin of keeping Stonewall's image undefiled, sacrifices the image of Cummins Jackson. See Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 281, 5, 11-12.

³⁴⁶ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 393.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 385.

³⁴⁸ Robert Selph Henry, "First with the Most" Forrest (Indianapolis, 1944), pp. 24, 26, 27.

³⁴⁹ See the following pages of this dissertation: pp. 68ff, 167, 173ff.

The irony (most of it unconscious, apparently) in Lytle's biography springs both from what Lytle tells us of Forrest's business career and from what Lytle minimizes or leaves out of his account of Forrest's relation to slaves and money. The irony is not eradicated by Lytle's pious, but quite brief and abstract, statements that the Southwest lacked a religion to curb its devotion to the things of the world and that when the Southern feudalism and its avatar, Bedford Forrest, were "cut down" in their "prime" the "vices and virtues of the wilderness" were "still a part of [their] . . . character."³⁵⁰ These abstract remarks are made near the beginning and end of the biography. They do not control Lytle's presentation of the concrete details of Forrest's life. Lytle does not offer any serious criticism of Forrest's bourgeois activities or of his mammoth planting operations. In fact, Lytle seems to relish Forrest's large success.

Lytle begins his biography with an admiring record of the boy Forrest's violent encounters with panthers, dogs, and human beings.³⁵¹ Also emphasized by Lytle is the youthful Forrest's ability to wrest from the frontier soil a living for his widowed

³⁵⁰ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 16, 390. Near the end of his life (Lytle notes) Forrest joined the church and declared that his life had been "a battle from the start" and that he "had seen too much of violence" and wanted to close his days "at peace with all the world." (Ibid., p. 386.) This move on Forrest's part may show that adversity had taught him to see how both his business and planting ventures and his war action had placed him in conflict with many of his fellow men. But it scarcely blots out the vigor and zest with which he built his fortune and fought the war; nor does Lytle's report of Forrest's conversion undo his own celebration of Forrest's earlier life.

³⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 3-7, 13-15, 18.

mother and her other children.³⁵² Forrest's young manhood, when he branches out into trading of various sorts, is not much dwelt upon by Lytle.³⁵³ Certainly, Lytle does not criticize Forrest for his middle-class operations. On the specific question of whether Forrest viewed the "economic commodity" as a "thing-to-be-used" or as a "thing-to-be-sold,"³⁵⁴ Lytle maintains a discreet silence. "Hard work and shrewd trading" is the formula with which Lytle accounts for Forrest's success³⁵⁵--nor does Lytle label this a "bourgeois" formula. As dealer in horses, slaves, and real estate, Forrest engaged in "bold . . . speculations," says Lytle--and adds that these speculations were "generally successful, because they were based on sound judgment and resolute execution."³⁵⁶

On the business practices of Forrest as slave dealer and on the forces which induced him to give up slave trading, Lytle is rather explicit--but he carefully steers a path which will minimize the commercial traits both of Forrest (the slave dealer) and

³⁵² Ibid., p. 17.

³⁵³ Ibid., 18-19, 23, 27-28.

³⁵⁴ The quoted phrases are from Lytle's analysis of the difference between the medieval and the modern attitudes toward the "economic commodity." Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 411.

³⁵⁵ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 18.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

of the Southern planters who ostensibly disapproved of slave traders.³⁵⁷ Forrest's decision to quit the slave-trading business and take up planting is used by Lytle as an occasion for stressing the extremely noncommercial character of Southern slave-owners. Forrest gave up his slave mart, says Lytle, because "in the Southern feudalism" it was "very dishonorable to traffic" in slaves. This "prejudice against slave dealers," Lytle explains,

has many remote causes, but one very definite cause. The close personal association between slave and master, particularly between slave and mistress, caused the planters tacitly to ignore the economics of his condition out of respect for him as a person. The slave understood his relationship, that he owned the master as much as the master owned him. It was facetiously said in Virginia when men maintained worn-out plantations at no profit purely to feed and clothe their slaves that the trees would have posters advertising for runaway masters. Because the slave dealers looked on the negro only in terms of trade, Southerners considered them as debased.³⁵⁸

Having used as a pretext to praise the patriarchal, non-exploitive attitude of planters Forrest's change from slave trading to planting, Lytle pauses to emphasize the kindness with which Forrest treated the Negroes even while he was still a slave trader. Forrest "never separated a family," Lytle notes, and when he made a purchase, he "turned him over to his body servant, Jerry, with

³⁵⁷ Caroline Gordon, through the sensibility of her characters in the novel None Shall Look Back, calls attention to slaveowners' being shocked at the idea that Forrest had been a slave trader before the war. Gordon, None Shall Look Back, pp. 28, 29. Clement Eaton notes in his History of the Old South (pp. 253-254, 279n) that there is "disagreement among observers as to whether Southern society looked down upon these merchants of men."

³⁵⁸ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 27-28.

orders to wash and dress him in clean garments from head to foot."³⁵⁹ Tate cites similar details in his biography of Jefferson Davis--and makes the comment that not all traders were as kind as Forrest.³⁶⁰ Curiously enough, although--to Tate's and Lytle's credit--it must be emphasized that they admit the evils of slave trading in general,³⁶¹ neither of them seems to realize that the "fine treatment" which Forrest gave his merchandise might simply be good for business. Lytle seems to think that the "fine treatment" sprang from some fount of patriarchal kindness in Bedford's Southern bosom.³⁶² It does not occur to Lytle, apparently, that, after all, a clean slave might sell better than a filthy one.³⁶³ Once more Tate and Lytle miss an opportunity to visualize fully the possible importance of the "cash nexus" in Old Southern society.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁶⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 42-43.

³⁶¹ Ibid., Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 28.

³⁶² Says Lytle: "Bedford, being a Southern man, mitigated the usual evils of the bargaining as much as he could." Ibid. It is probably not honesty but a desire to exploit racial humor which prompts Lytle to record, later in his biography of Forrest, the testimony of a Negro who escaped from a fort being attacked by Forrest during the Civil War: "'I node Mr. Forrest before the war . . .--he was hard on niggers,'" Lytle quotes the Negro as saying. Lytle does not bother to note that the alleged comment of the Negro conflicts with the account he himself has given of Forrest's treatment of Negroes before the War. Ibid., pp. 335, 28.

³⁶³ Robert Penn Warren's novel Band of Angels does admit the possibility that a slave trader might bathe slaves simply as a way of making them more saleable. Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels (New York, 1955), p. 85.

Lytle obviously views as a very admirable move Forrest's becoming a planter. With this move, says Lytle, the "wandering of the Forrests [Bedford's forebears] had at last come to an end. Bedford had established himself as one of the rich men of a feudal culture, fast becoming static." The South, Lytle implies, was at last ready, after a succession of migrations, to become a settled society: "The Wilderness had been reduced to a planting and farming country, and the Great Road, which for half a century had stretched continually southward, was now come to its end." At this point, just as the South is ready to settle down and possess the Promised Land of feudal stability, Lytle brings the villain--the North, of course--on the stage. Before "Bedford and the people like him could settle down and begin to live on the land, they would have to fight a more strenuous enemy than the Wilderness,"³⁶⁴ Lytle declares. Not Southern acquisitiveness but Northern aggressiveness is the villain in Lytle's biography. Lytle seems proud of the fact that Forrest "did so well with cotton that he raised a thousand bales in 1861 at a profit of thirty thousand dollars."³⁶⁵ But Lytle omits certain facts which might bring out clearly the resemblance between Forrest and the kind of commercial man whom Tate and Lytle claim to dislike. For instance, Lytle does not point out that after Forrest had lived less than a year on his cotton plantation and before the North came on the scene, he left his plantation and returned to Memphis

³⁶⁴ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 28.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

to make his residence.³⁶⁶ That Forrest was willing to be an absentee planter is a possibility which Lytle is perhaps not willing to discuss. Nor does Lytle mention that the "most typical, the greatest, leader [the South's] . . . feudalism had fashioned"³⁶⁷ claimed after the Civil War that by 1861 he had been worth a million and a half dollars³⁶⁸--a fortune which hardly suggests that Forrest was content with a "modest conquest of nature."³⁶⁹

Although the post-Civil War period lies outside the scope of this dissertation, Lytle's treatment of Forrest's activities during Reconstruction should be noted as a further illustration of Lytle's unwillingness to admit fully Forrest's acquisitiveness and also as an example of Lytle's complacency about the racial structure of Southern society. Emphasizing Forrest's post-war poverty and his generosity towards Confederate veterans,³⁷⁰ Lytle fails to note that in 1868 Forrest reportedly thought of a scheme for conquering Mexico--a scheme which included confiscation of Mexican mines and church property.³⁷¹ Furthermore, the well-known activities of Forrest in an attempted

³⁶⁶ Henry, "First with the Most" Forrest, p. 27

³⁶⁷ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 385.

³⁶⁸ Henry, "First with the Most" Forrest, pp. 13, 471.

³⁶⁹ The quoted phrase is from Tate's description of the Old South's relative non-acquisitiveness. Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

³⁷⁰ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 386-387.

³⁷¹ Henry, "First with the Most" Forrest, pp. 452-453.

railroad-promoting scheme in the Southern states are minimized by Lytle, who mentions these activities chiefly by way of exploiting the pathos in Forrest's failure in this scheme.³⁷²

In short, in his picture of Forrest both before and after the war, Lytle successfully avoids taking advantage of the opportunity to criticize Forrest as an exponent of the commercial or acquisitive tendencies which might characterize men who succeeded under the Old Southern system of slaveholding and slave trading.

Lytle's attitude toward the Ku Klux Klan, which is generally believed to have been headed by Forrest, gives a final indication of how Lytle feels about Forrest's handling of Negroes--a prime form of property under the pre-Civil War "feudalism." The Ku Klux Klan was, says Lytle, "the last brilliant example in Western Culture of what Feudalism could do."³⁷³ At a time when the "South was disarmed and helpless," says Lytle, the "Black Republicans who had forced the South into secession . . . pushed through . . . a reconstruction which aimed at complete destruction of the Southern States With the aid of troops the servile population was

³⁷² Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 386. Cf. Henry, "First with the Most" Forrest, pp. 456-458. Henry notes that Forrest "sensed" the importance of the coal and iron regions of Alabama and "pressed them upon the attention of the commercial world of Memphis." Ibid., p. 456.

³⁷³ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 384.

used as a tool to carry out this reconstruction policy."³⁷⁴

Then, at this "most tragic moment of Southern history, when all seemed lost beyond redemption," Forrest "appeared, unexpectedly, mysteriously, almost supernaturally [as Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan], and snatched the enjoyment of victory from the enemy's hands, from those Black Republican politicians who had set out to destroy the South and the Old Political Union. The triumph of the Ku Klux Klan," Lytle concludes, "was the triumph of the political genius of the South, a genius that failed, because of its limitations, to save the Union but which, at last, had managed to save itself by following the most typical, the greatest, leader

³⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 381-382. The epigraph to Tate's poem "Jubilo" is an excerpt from the popular song (known variously as "Kingdom Coming," "The Year of Jubilee," etc.) which epitomizes the mixture of Utopianism and brute force in certain aspects of some Negroes' behavior during and just after the Civil War. Tate seems to feel that there is a significant similarity between the spirit expressed in the popular song and the spirit expressed in twentieth-century Utopian politics--politics which Tate sees as unnatural and as productive of war. See Tate, "Jubilo," Poems: 1922-1947, pp. 59-61. The Civil War and Reconstruction song known as "Kingdom Coming" or "The Year of Jubilee" may be found in the following collections: Thomas W. Talley, ed., Negro Folk Rhymes, Wise and Otherwise (New York, 1922), p. 58; and Newman I. White, American Negro Folk-Songs (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 170-171. Tate's comments in prose on the relation between Utopian politics and war may be found in Tate, "Christ and the Unicorn," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Spring, 1955), 177-178.

its feudalism had fashioned."³⁷⁵ Lytle seems utterly blind to the fact that the Ku Klux Klan represented a tragic denial by Southern white men of any willingness to find rational, constructive ways of helping freedmen to improve their condition.³⁷⁶ If Lytle's agrarianism were pure--and untainted by racism--he would at least observe and lament the fact that the Ku Klux Klan, in general, expressed sentiments which were hostile to the establishment of Negroes as independent landowners. That Lytle has only

³⁷⁵ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 385. Lytle is probably alluding, not to any moral limitations in the Southern political mind, but to practical weaknesses in its strategies. Elsewhere, Lytle cites the "antiquated states' rights" concept as one of the limitations of the Old Southern political mind. The conservatives' failure to achieve their objectives was partly due, says Lytle, to the fact that "they rested their defence, in crises, upon the sovereignty of states. Affairs had so clarified themselves by the 1830's that the true strategy was in the regional concept." Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 98.

³⁷⁶ Lytle's enthusiastic embracing of the Ku Klux Klan contrasts with the more complex attitude expressed by the narrator of Robert Penn Warren's novel, Band of Angels. Although Warren's narrator records some of the outrageous actions of Federal troops and officials in Louisiana during the latter phases of the War and the early years of Reconstruction, she does not represent the Ku Klux Klan or the Southern planter as pure-hearted saviors of Southern civilization. For example, having alluded to the "bad management and corruption" in the Freedmen's Bureau and to other signs of the "fading of all the old, grand hopes in the grind of day," the narrator pictures as "always, behind all, the Rebel planter, unreconciled in his heart, oath or no, hungry and hard, waiting his time, waiting with vagrancy law, legislative enactment, lash, estopment of wage, terror, but strongest of all, merely his presence, his hovering hand, his arrogance, his humor, his strange violence and stranger forbearances, his flash of understanding, his stroke of justice, all in all, the sign of some cranky order and accommodation in the world." Warren, Band of Angels, p. 263. See also ibid., pp. 249, 273-275, 276. Warren's narrator, herself an ex-slave, sees the Rebel planter as a paradoxical mixture of injustice and justice.

unalloyed praise for Forrest and the "feudal" Ku Klux Klan suggests the possibility that Lytle's concept of feudalism, far from being a humane concept, might provide a useful sanction for some modern variety of slave labor system.

A survey of Lytle's handling of Forrest's relation to Negroes and money will lead the liberal to the following conclusion: if, as Lytle says, Forrest is the "most typical strong man" of the "feudal" or "Agrarian" Old South,³⁷⁷ then truly the values of that Old South were neither superior to, nor even very different from, Northern bourgeois or business values at their worst. Indeed (the liberal will observe), by his largely uncritical account³⁷⁸ of Forrest's rise from frontier farmer to large-scale planter, Lytle has simply produced a version of the myth of the ambitious backwoodsman--a version which could, with little or no modification, serve to rationalize the "ruthless drive" of the "big business man" in modern America.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 393.

³⁷⁸ Lytle's only significant criticism of Forrest is a comment on Forrest's letting his frontier temper betray him into insulting General Bragg. This insult, says Lytle, Bragg later repaid at the expense of the Southern cause. Ibid., pp. 237-239.

³⁷⁹ The quoted phrases are from Lytle's own description of the manner in which the myth of the backwoodsman functions in modern America. See Lytle, "The Backwoods Progression," American Review, I (September, 1933), 409. In "The Backwoods Progression," Lytle expresses contempt for the modern American who instinctively identifies himself with the backwoodsman. Says Lytle: the ambitious man in modern America, mindful of the "ancestral giant who reduced the strongholds of nature," asks himself whether this ancestral giant's descendants "might not . . . crush obstacles just as great, riding the backs of the proletariat and the farmer." (Ibid., p. 429.) Though Lytle seems scarcely to realize it (and certainly he has no real qualms about celebrating Forrest), Bedford Forrest is nothing more than an "ancestral giant" who rode to riches astride the backs not only of the Negro but also of the farmer.

Maintenance of Support for the War

Interesting though it may be to observe the "patriarchal" (or "feudal") and the "commercial" characteristics of Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Bedford Forrest in relation to their property, it is clear that a much more absorbing concern of Tate and Lytle is these leaders' equipment for helping the South win its independence. The characteristics that Tate and Lytle seem to desire above all else in these men are an ability to keep the plain people convinced that the war was their war and a willingness to prosecute the war without hesitation to a victorious conclusion. By these standards, as we shall see, Jefferson Davis is measured and found wanting, whereas Stonewall Jackson and Bedford Forrest are presented as men either of whom, if their talents had been allowed a wider scope of operation, might have directed a strategy that would have won the war.

Not all of Tate's objections to Jefferson Davis as a war leader are directly related to Davis's social background and social attitudes. Intellectual pride³⁸⁰ and stubbornness,³⁸¹ irritability³⁸² and neuroticism,³⁸³ a mentality capable of thinking only in terms of certain abstractions³⁸⁴--these interwoven traits,

³⁸⁰ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 65, 79, 198.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 113.

³⁸² Ibid., pp. 149. Cf. Owsley, State Rights in the Confederacy, p. x.

³⁸³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 79, 150. Cf. Frank L. Owsley, [Review of A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, by J. B. Jones, ed. Howard Swiggett], Southern Review, I (Winter, 1936), 684.

³⁸⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 81, 204, et passim.

which Tate sees as contributing to Davis's failure to lead the South to victory, are, of course, the monopoly of no social class. But to some extent, at least, Tate seems to trace Davis's unfitness for his job³⁸⁵ to the interrelated facts that Davis was a transitional figure in the rise of the Lower Southern feudalism and that most of his early life was not spent on a cotton plantation of the Lower South.

Using data accumulated by Walter Lynwood Fleming,³⁸⁶ Tate suggests that Davis's having spent a large portion of his early years in Kentucky prevented him from absorbing in his youth the system of life typical of the Cotton Kingdom.³⁸⁷ To Davis's years spent outside the Lower South Tate perhaps attributes, at least in part, not only the split between "intellect . . . and . . . feelings" which he perceives in Davis's attitude toward the Federal Union³⁸⁸ but also the un-Southernism which he sees in Davis's attitude toward science.³⁸⁹ A second fact about Davis's

³⁸⁵ Tate's attempt to make Davis into a tragic figure cannot be discussed in this dissertation. The attempt depends upon Tate's assumption that, though Davis was not a great president or military leader, he was, "in his own being, a great man." Ibid., pp. 251, 270.

³⁸⁶ Tate acknowledges his indebtedness to Fleming. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 303; and Walter L. Fleming, "The Early Life of Jefferson Davis," Louisiana State University Bulletin, n.s., VIII (June, 1917), 151-176.

³⁸⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 58-61.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 12, 95.

³⁸⁹ "Davis, to the end of his life, believed that men would improve under the joint influence of Christianity and science, and he had no suspicion that he was ever the leader of a profoundly anti-scientific society." Ibid., p. 87.

life--the fact that he was neither a self-made "aristocrat" nor the scion of a long-established family--is provided with interesting overtones by Tate. Tate evidently feels that Davis suffered from his peculiar position as the younger son of a man who became a substantial farmer only late in life³⁹⁰ and as the younger brother of a man who achieved for himself prosperity "beyond measure" as lawyer and planter.³⁹¹ Davis (Tate points out) did not have as a child the kind of environment which the later wealth of his brother was to make available to him. Tate seems to think it significant that of the years Davis spent at home before he was seventeen, his first four were "spent in the purely frontier region of southern Kentucky," one year was spent in Louisiana, and six others were spent "on a cotton farm--not a plantation--where the life was hardly typical of the ultimate purposes of his section."³⁹² Neither by his own labor nor by virtue of land "inherited in the

³⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 67, 57.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 52. Although Tate considers Jefferson Davis's personal relation to the Lower South anomalous, he considers the rise of the Davis family to have been typical of the rise of Lower Southern society. In one respect, Tate is quite sophisticated about the rise of that society: he points out that it was a society of nouveaux riches who tended to make rather far-fetched claims about the manners and stature of its ancestors. Yet having admitted that such nouveaux riches as the Davis brothers perhaps attributed to their fathers a "knightly grace" and "oracular" wisdom that the fathers had not really possessed, Tate suggests that this attitude of the Lower Southern ruling class toward its fathers was an example of that "identification of power and inherited responsibility" which is the "best basis for a society." See ibid., pp. 51, 55-56. See also pp. 20-21 of this dissertation.

³⁹² Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 61. Six of his first seventeen years were spent away from home in Kentucky schools. Ibid., pp. 59-61.

regular line of responsibility from father to son"³⁹³ did the young Jefferson Davis set up as a planter, Tate observes. The land upon which Jefferson Davis established himself had, rather, been "won by the patient effort" of his elder brother,³⁹⁴ who (says Tate) had in everything "smoothed his [Jefferson's] path."³⁹⁵ As Tate presents him, Davis did not in his youth or young manhood gain "any discipline over his feelings," for, says Tate, "this comes by adversity or by long training to a traditional ideal"³⁹⁶--two kinds of experience which Davis lacked because of the moment he occupied in the history of his family's rise. A transitional figure, Davis is presented by Tate as a man who had neither carved out his place for himself (as his brother or his pioneer father had done) nor inherited long-established family ideals. With Davis's "in-between" position in the development of the Lower Southern planter class, Tate seems to link three aspects of Davis's failure as a war leader: namely, Davis's failure to persuade the people that they should support the war unremittently; his failure to win and keep the support of the fire-eating politicians; and his failure to recognize early enough the merits of Stonewall Jackson and Bedford Forrest.

Peculiar irony attaches to Tate's complaint that Davis was unable to maintain popular support for the war. Since Tate himself

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 68.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

has defined the Old Southern polity as "agrarian, class rule" (to be contrasted with Northern democracy)³⁹⁷ it is scarcely reasonable of him to wish that Davis had made the Confederate regime "popular." Yet this is precisely what Tate would apparently desire of Davis. (In this desire Tate parallels the Nordacist Hamilton J. Eckenrode, whose regret that Davis "did not understand the arts of demagoguery"³⁹⁸ and that Davis "made no effort until late in the war to win the people"³⁹⁹ is a possible source for Tate's harping on this theme. Andrew N. Lytle goes even further than Tate does in condemning Davis for his lack of rapport with the people.)⁴⁰⁰ A number of Tate's comments on Davis suggest that Davis, as the younger brother of a man who had won his place in the "aristocratic" class, was too self-consciously the gentleman and that this fact interfered with his successfully uniting the people behind him. Well-satisfied (as we have seen) with the patriarchal traits which Davis demonstrates in relation to his slave property, Tate seems to feel that Davis lacked that degree and quality of seasoning in the feudal ideal which would have made his personality command allegiance from the small white man. Honors had come to Davis too quickly and too easily,⁴⁰¹ Tate

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁹⁸ Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, p. 121

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 345. Tate mentions Eckenrode as one of the important biographers of Davis. Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 303.

⁴⁰⁰ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 36, 356.

⁴⁰¹ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 79.

suggests, confirming in him a sense that both his native talents and the kind of education he had had must be superior. Davis's West Point training issued, says Tate, in a "belief in education as the remedy for all ills, and a haughty pride, an impatience with the imperfections of simple men."⁴⁰² In theory, Davis grasped before the war (and in advance of some other Southern politicians) the necessity for the planters to go over to the Democracy, to "join . . . hands with the poorer people" and "create . . . a united South,"⁴⁰³ Tate notes. But during the war (Tate points out) Davis forgot that the people "needed to be coaxed and coddled; and he deprived them of the kind of public performance that they most loved--oratory from their leaders."⁴⁰⁴

At certain moments in Jefferson Davis Tate's critique of the isolating pride which divided Davis from the people seems to transcend the usual confines of Tate's feudal ideology.⁴⁰⁵ But the humanity which seems to inform such moments of Tate's biography may have a tough pragmatic substratum, for Tate's comments on Davis's handling of politicians indicate that Tate's primary interest is in the practical question "What kind of leader could have made possible the establishment of Southern independence?" Tate's remarks on Davis's alienation of leading fire-eaters demonstrate that Tate's major concern is with how

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 180.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 198, 266.

the war could have been won and not with how the undemocratic attitudes of Davis expressed a moral weakness in the Southern cause.⁴⁰⁶ No writer who had a genuine interest in a democracy purged of plantation feudalism and slave labor could lament, as Tate evidently does, Davis's failure to keep the support of such men as Robert Barnwell Rhett and Louis T. Wigfall.⁴⁰⁷

Tate's comments on Davis's handling of generals further illustrate Tate's willingness to imply that Davis's veneer of aristocratic attitudes interfered with the successful prosecution of the war. Davis preferred to find generals from West Point or, in any case, generals who had the "manners of the gentry," Tate observes. Tate praises Davis for discovering General Lee

⁴⁰⁶ Tate clearly feels that Davis made a mistake when he eliminated "the powerful radicals" from his cabinet. The radicals (or fire-eaters) were motivated by a "powerful desire to be rid of the United States," says Tate, whereas Davis (Tate says almost contemptuously) was merely asserting a principle--the right of self-government. Davis was not, says Tate, a typical Lower Southerner, for at some deep level of his nature he was "bent upon reconciliation and reunion" with the Federal government. He "lacked the fierce unreasoning Southern patriotism" which such fire-eating radicals as Robert Barnwell Rhett had. Ibid., pp. 27, 88, 94-95, 131-132.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 150. Tate may have picked up from Hamilton J. Eckenrode this emphasis on Davis's alienation of the fire-eaters. See Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, p. 187.

It is interesting to note that despite his attraction to such fire-eating planter-secessionists as Rhett and Wigfall Tate states that the armed deserters who pillaged upland areas during the War "hated the Negro because he was the instrument of their own neglect under the planter régime." In accounting for certain lawless and anti-conscription elements in the South, Tate is evidently forced to admit that the regime of planters (including, presumably, Rhett and Wigfall) neglected certain small white men. Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 236.

but deeply regrets that Davis didn't recognize the genius of Bedford Forrest and Stonewall Jackson in time to give these two latter generals major roles in the army.⁴⁰⁸

The perfect contrast to Davis, the unseasoned "aristocrat" and war leader, is presented by Tate and Lytle in their portraits of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson and Nathan Bedford Forrest as generals. Tate and Lytle expend far more admiration upon Jackson and Forrest than upon those usual symbols of the Southern cause, Davis and Robert E. Lee. The primary reason for this admiration is the fact that Jackson and Forrest were more absolute than were Davis and Lee in their attitude toward the War. Curiously enough, in spite of his praise for the code of the gentleman⁴⁰⁹ and in spite of his commendation of medieval and post-medieval days when wars were, he thinks, more humane than they are in modern times,⁴¹⁰ Tate seems to deplore, on more than one occasion, the dominance of Davis's and Lee's chivalrous

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 137, 146-147.

⁴⁰⁹ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 425-426 (quoted on pp. 301-302 of this dissertation).

⁴¹⁰ Tate, "The New Provincialism," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 285; Tate, "Christ and the Unicorn," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Spring, 1955), 177-178.

or feudal mode of fighting.⁴¹¹ And Lytle seems to glory in Bedford Forrest's generally unchivalrous manner of making war.⁴¹²

Because Tate, looking back to 1861, is convinced that the "great need of the time" was not the establishment of the moral position of the South but its "independence at any cost,"⁴¹³ he must admire Stonewall Jackson, whose one idea was military triumph for the South.⁴¹⁴ Jackson, one gathers from Tate's description of his projects,⁴¹⁵ was bothered by no such scruples and complexes as determined the conduct of Davis. Davis, Tate says tartly,

didn't want the South to win its own war; he wanted it to act upon a noble and martyred defensive, so that Europe might be moved to intercede A false set of values got into the head of the Confederate President at the start. He wasn't a revolutionist, but he proceeded with revolutionary psychology; he

⁴¹¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 69, 90-91, 272-273. For evidence that Tate and Lytle deeply regret Davis's failure to give Forrest and Jackson major roles in the Southern army, see the following: Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 285-286; Lytle Bedford Forrest, pp. 180, 283, 304, 342-343, 357, 370.

Tate implies that the Old South's "feudal" devotion to the concept of fortified cities was one weakness in its military strategy. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 193. Lytle observes that one military weakness of the Confederacy sprang from Davis's failing to "devise . . . a general plan of operations for his Confederacy" and from his "only attending to his departments, like a feudal overlord, one at a time." Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 194, 271.

⁴¹² Ibid., pp. 98, 134, 139, 333. Lytle does, however, note that Forrest was moved to knightly emotions and behavior when women aided him. Ibid., pp. 43, 167-168.

⁴¹³ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 132.

⁴¹⁴ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 107, 113.

⁴¹⁵ See, for example, ibid., pp. 132-133, 190-191.

didn't want to give the appearance of waging an offensive war, a war of aggression.

Tate gives his own version of who the revolutionists were and why the South should have, from the outset, waged an offensive war:

An offensive war would have meant only a suppression of the Northern revolutionists; it wouldn't have been a war of aggression at all. Washington should have been occupied by the Southerners as their own capital, as the capital of the United States, before the Northern revolutionists could put Lincoln there and get the country up in arms.⁴¹⁶

Tate emphasizes that Jackson sensed the importance of invading the North early in the War: after the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, Jackson kept saying "'Give me 10,000 men and I will be in Washington tomorrow morning.'" Tate's judgment is that "Jackson with 10,000 men could have ended the so-called Civil War."⁴¹⁷

Tate can render a tribute to the impeccable code of Davis or Lee.⁴¹⁸ But at the same time, as he looks back to the 1860's, he seems to wish that the policies of Jackson had prevailed. Of Lee, whose chivalry was perhaps responsible for such acts as his not agreeing to a night attack on the cornered enemy

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 69. Italics mine.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

⁴¹⁸ Davis, says Tate, "had not flouted a single convention of either private or public morality," he "had made war with rigid propriety," he could say "that his enemy had violated the rules of 'chivalric warfare,' not he," and he "could say, in fact, that he had conducted a great war under terrible disadvantages with almost Quixotic honor." Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 293

(after the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862),

Tate says:

He was probably the greatest soldier of all time, but his greatness as a man kept him from being a completely successful soldier. He could not bring himself to seize every means to the proposed end. Jackson, who saw one object only [i.e., defeat of the enemy and establishment of Southern independence], could use them all.⁴¹⁹

Tate does not criticize the means which Jackson used--not even the bombardment of a town: this bombardment Tate easily rationalizes as not only "retaliation against a useless Federal bombardment" of a Virginia town but also a cover for demolition of a railroad bridge.⁴²⁰

Certain details illustrating Jackson's blind and fanatical devotion to the Southern cause are omitted by Tate from his biography--possibly because these details might alienate the reader from Jackson. For instance, Tate does not point out (as the more recent biographer, Burke Davis, does) that Jackson "tried to impress members of rebellious sects into the army" and "arrested a number of conscientious objectors who tried to

⁴¹⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 153, 272-273. See also ibid., p. 285. Cf. the question raised by Lytle as to whether Lee's impeccable behavior during the War and the Reconstruction contained a flaw consisting of a "refusal to demean his personal code to save the cause." Andrew N. Lytle, "R. E. Lee," Southern Review, I (Autumn, 1935), 421-422. Tate's full opinion on Lee would be easier to define if he had published the biography of Lee upon which he worked during the early 1930's. See "Contributors," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 27. Tate's attraction to Jackson is indicated by the fact that after a tribute to Lee, he declares: "Jackson was as able a general as Lee, and he should have commanded the Army of Northern Virginia, or the armies of the West." Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 285-286.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

escape to the North." Nor does Tate mention that Jackson had hoped to make child soldiers from the Military Institute of Lexington "a permanent part of his army."⁴²¹ From Lytle's biography of Bedford Forrest, however, it is difficult to believe that any details of Forrest's relish of battle have been omitted. Furthermore, Lytle's manner of reporting Forrest's grim enjoyment of war suggests that Lytle himself relishes such details. Indeed, more than once, Lytle presents Forrest's threats, violence, and trickery almost as if they were good fun.⁴²² For example, Lytle seems to think it amusing when Forrest, angered by a proud Northern officer's retort to a demand for surrender, pretended at first not to see the raising of a white flag and had a few more shots from the artillery fired on the enemy before receiving the surrender.⁴²³ Another measure of the

⁴²¹ Davis, They Called Him Stonewall, pp. 173, 180.

⁴²² Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 41, 102, 139, 159, 164-165, 258, 262-263, 350. Cf. Donald Davidson's poem "The Running of Streight (A Fragment of the Forrest Saga)," Lee in the Mountains, pp. 23-35.

Lytle's first novel further illustrates the peculiar fascination which violence has for him. That novel, The Long Night, is remarkable for the complacency with which it contemplates an individual's retaliating by extralegal means against the murder of his father. For Lytle the tragedy of his protagonist seems to lie, not in his having devoted himself to a life of violent retaliation, but in his not being able, when the Civil War came, to subordinate his work of private vengeance to the business of fighting Yankees. See Andrew [N.] Lytle, The Long Night (Indianapolis, 1936), pp. 70-71, 216, 224, 329-330, et passim.

⁴²³ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 333. Caroline Gordon dramatizes the horror of some of the gentlefolk at Forrest's unchivalrous mode of fighting. In her novel None Shall Look Back Forrest figures as the kind of leader whose devotion to the cause was total. See Gordon, None Shall Look Back, pp. 27-29, 23, 299-300, 354, 375, et passim.

exhilaration which Lytle seems to experience in reviewing Forrest's wily and bloody deeds may be found in the fact that Lytle's biography tries to make Forrest assume almost supernatural proportions.⁴²⁴ In fact, so successful is Lytle in suggesting Forrest's supernatural powers that Donald Davidson takes one of Lytle's anecdotes, writes a poem about it, and concludes with a claim that we

. . . do not doubt that Forrest can come
From Mississippi side
Back where the living do not fight
And only the dead can ride.⁴²⁵

This, surely, is myth with a vengeance--and a potential consequence.

It is amusing to follow the complicated process by which Tate tries to purge Stonewall Jackson's military ambition of its mundane connotations. In 1951 Tate spoke with considerable acerbity of the "organized adolescents of all societies known as the military class."⁴²⁶ The twentieth-century liberal may

⁴²⁴ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 68, 175, 390. In analyzing the bases for Forrest's hold upon his men, Lytle attributes to Forrest somewhat the same traits that John Crowe Ransom attributes to a "God with Thunder." Forrest's character, Lytle points out, elicited fear and respect from his soldiers. Discipline of the kind which Forrest achieved in his army is, says Lytle, "that highly precious, infrequent discipline" which comes from the "voluntary surrender of the will, judgment, and responsibility for life to another." Significantly, Lytle continues: "It [i.e., such surrender?] is the nearest approach men ever go in deifying one of their own kind. The basis of this, like that of religion, is fear; but a fear which is forgotten and called love when the fruits of victory soften its pains and labors." Ibid., pp. 54, 55. Cf. Ransom, God without Thunder, pp. 313, 315, et passim.

⁴²⁵ Davidson, "The Last Rider," Lee in the Mountains, p. 45.

⁴²⁶ Tate, "To Whom Is the Poet Responsible?" Forlorn Demon, p. 22.

be inclined to assign Stonewall Jackson to that class. But in his biography Tate tries to represent Jackson as a man whose will was eventually so fully surrendered to God that military distinction no longer meant anything to him. Tate's mode of building up this image is exceedingly sophisticated. He assumes that the youthful Jackson was afflicted with a severe case of ancestor-worship--a feeling that his forefathers who had fought in the American Revolution were figures of far greater dimension than were his family in his own time.⁴²⁷ Then, gradually, Tate purifies Jackson's early, avowed desire for "distinction" until finally (Tate implies) that desire for distinction disappeared--swallowed up in a devotion to the Southern cause and to God.⁴²⁸ Oddly enough, although Tate notes Jackson's prejudice against Catholicism,⁴²⁹ he fails to capitalize upon the possibility that Jackson's Protestantism, so well interwoven with his military ambition, may be as good an example as could be found in the Old South in support of the theory (advanced in Tate's own writings) that Protestantism is "hardly a religion at all but

⁴²⁷ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 4, 47-48.

⁴²⁸ Jackson's alleged progress from a desire for distinction to pure desire to serve country and God may be traced particularly on the following pages of Tate's Stonewall Jackson: pp. 10, 33, 40-42, 49, 63, 73, 95, 109-110, 159, 168, 279, 281. Tate refrains from quotation and comment which would suggest, as Burke Davis's biography does, that Jackson as he grew older "cloaked his ambition with discretion." See Davis, They Called Him Stonewall, p. 68.

⁴²⁹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 47, 51.

rather a disguised secular ambition."⁴³⁰ In the end Tate, no less than Christopher Hollis, assumes--though he does not explicitly state it--that Jackson was a genuine "Christian soldier."⁴³¹

If pure violence and pure military achievement were the only traits with which Tate and Lytle credited Forrest and Jackson, their portraits of these generals would perhaps not be particularly appealing to men of good will. What makes Tate's and Lytle's portraits somewhat attractive is the emphasis which they place upon these generals' capacity to inspire men and upon their concern for their men's welfare. If we lose sight of the fact that both Tate and Lytle claim the Old South was moving toward a settled feudal society under class rule,⁴³² we may be tempted at moments to read more democracy and humanitarianism than we should into their accounts of

⁴³⁰ The quoted phrase is from Tate, "Religion and the Old South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 316.

⁴³¹ The quoted phrase is from Hollis, The American Heresy (New York, 1930), p. 198. Hollis goes so far as to say that Jackson was fighting "for the traditional way of European life." Ibid. Hollis is discussed on pp. 105-107, 162-163, and 208 of this dissertation.

⁴³² See pp. 173-174, 264-265, 314n, and 367-369 of this dissertation. Note that even Bedford Forrest (whose ability to speak the language of the common soldier is evidently welcomed by Lytle as a contribution to social solidarity within the Confederate ranks) had seen to it that his younger brother Jeff "had the polish of a classical education" so that, with the "disappearance of the border and its ways," Jeff could "take his place among the leaders of the hardening culture of the Southwest." See Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 183. The Promised Land which Bedford Forrest was helping to create within his own family was a land of class rule, not democracy.

Jackson's and Forrest's relation to their troops. As Tate and Lytle present them, both Jackson and Forrest in a sense identify themselves with the common soldiers--Jackson by sharing their hardships and Forrest not only by sharing their hardships but by speaking their language and keeping loss of life at a minimum.⁴³³ Indeed, at times, it looks as if Tate and Lytle wish to stress that in the Southern army there was a great deal of democracy.⁴³⁴ But close reading of Lytle's biography of Forrest will convince the liberal that Lytle, at least, is interested in "democracy" only as a technique which produces a feeling of social solidarity. Pragmatism, rather than democratic principles, prompts both Lytle's denunciation of Jefferson Davis for his cotton snobbery⁴³⁵ and Lytle's praise of Forrest for arousing in his soldiers the "feeling that the South was one big clan, fighting that the small man, as well as the powerful, might live as he pleased."⁴³⁶ Democracy does not fight a war in order that a slaveowner and former slave

⁴³³ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 108; Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 111, 237, 322.

⁴³⁴ Both Tate and Lytle allude emphatically to the individualism of the ordinary Southern soldier (especially the yeoman) and to his feeling of independence and freedom. See Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 68; and Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 35-36.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., pp. 356-357.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

dealer may live as he pleases. Feudalism may, perhaps, fight such a war.

To conclude: a central irony of Tate's and Lytle's portraits of Jackson and Forrest lies in the fact that it was the "backwoods" traits of these generals which were especially useful in the war--that is, their capacity for single-minded violence and their relatively unpolished manners--whereas Tate and Lytle both claim that the Southern cause was the cause of a settled society under agrarian, class rule. The irony is underscored, in the case of Forrest, by the fact that Forrest obviously exemplifies Western acquisitiveness--a trait to which Old Southern tradition, according to Tate, was opposed and against which the Old South fought the war.⁴³⁷ Donald Davidson inadvertently betrays the irony at the heart of Tate's and Lytle's thinking about Southern war leaders when he complains that Jefferson Davis had "too grievously 'gone Virginian'" and "seemed incapable of discovering the Andrew Jacksons who ought to be leading Southwestern armies."⁴³⁸ Bedford Forrest is clearly one of the "Andrew Jacksons" whom Davidson has in mind. And in Tate's and Lytle's mythology (though not in Davidson's),

⁴³⁷ See pp. 338-339 and 368-369 of this dissertation for discussion of the following passages in Tate's writings: Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 38-39; Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 87, 301-302.

⁴³⁸ Davidson, "The Two Old Wests," The Attack on Leviathan, p. 176.

it will be recalled, Andrew Jackson exemplifies Western instability.⁴³⁹ Davidson's betrayal of the similarity between Bedford Forrest and Andrew Jackson makes it look as though Lytle and Tate wish that Western instability and acquisitiveness (typified as clearly in Forrest as in Andrew Jackson) had been given a chance to win the War for the South--a South which would then (Tate and Lytle sometimes seem to believe) have settled down to be relatively stable and non-acquisitive ever afterward!

⁴³⁹ See pp. 338-353 of this dissertation.

VI. REMAINS OF THE SEABOARD GENTRY

In his novel The Fathers, Tate establishes an image of a relatively non-acquisitive gentleman of the mature seaboard South--a gentleman whose qualities he carefully distinguishes from those of the pseudo-gentlemen of that area. Then, as we shall see, Tate allows his story to suggest that in the crisis of Civil War this non-acquisitive Virginia gentleman should have allied himself with the more acquisitive Lower South--the Cotton South.⁴⁴⁰

In The Fathers, assorted gentlemen and pseudo-gentlemen of Virginia and Maryland--Major Lewis Buchan, John Langton, George Posey, Jarman Posey, and others--are seen through the eyes of Lacy Buchan, Tate's narrator, who records many years after the Civil War the events of his late adolescence (1858-1861). As remembered by his son Lacy, Major Lewis Buchan emerges as the acme of the Virginia squireocracy--a gentleman in whom solid virtue and formality of manners are fused with Jeffersonian simplicity. (It is almost as if Tate set out to depict a Southern gentleman whose qualities would disarm the

⁴⁴⁰ Incipient sectionalism within the South, based on the feeling of some tobacco planters that the cotton planters had become too lavishly or too quickly wealthy, is probed dramatically in Caroline Gordon's novel None Shall Look Back and in Lytle's novel The Long Night. Fontaine Allard, the Kentucky patriarch in Miss Gordon's novel, decides that in spite of the fact that the Lower Southerners are fantastically rich, all parts of the South must back them up in their defiance of the invading North, since the important thing is for all Southerners to have "'freedom.'" Gordon, None Shall Look Back, pp. 8, 10-11. Cf. Lytle, The Long Night, p. 76.

modern Southern liberal who is inclined to be suspicious of all gentlemen except those of a distinctly Jeffersonian cast.) Major Buchan's fitness to symbolize the values of the whole culture of which he is ostensibly the fine essence is implied in his ability to speak four levels of language: first, "standard English of the eighteenth century" (used with family and friends); second, "the speech of the 'plain people' abounding in many archaisms"; third, "the speech of the negroes, which was merely late seventeenth or early eighteenth century English ossified"; and, fourth, "the Johnsonian diction appropriate to formal occasions, a style that he could wield in perfect sentences four hundred words long."⁴⁴¹ Lacy Buchan, Tate's narrator, writing after the era of educational egalitarianism has set in,⁴⁴² significantly remarks of his father's speech:

He would not have understood our conception of "correct English." Speech was like manners, an expression of sensibility and taste. This view no longer holds in an era of public schools and state universities.⁴⁴³

Expressing the best in the code of his class, Buchan is largely exempt from certain extremely undemocratic traits which are often attributed to persons in his position. His ability to speak the language of the "plain people" stands in sharp contrast to the inability of Mrs. Posey (mother of Buchan's son-in-law, George Posey) to "admit that common people were real"--"It is

⁴⁴¹ Tate, The Fathers, p. 17.

⁴⁴² Cf. Fletcher, "Education Past and Present," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 92-121.

⁴⁴³ Tate, The Fathers, p. 17

just too painful,'" she says, "'that they should exist.'"⁴⁴⁴ Buchan regards with mildly critical humor the branch of his connections who complain that if Thomas Jefferson had not been so perversely democratic they might now be members of the royal family;⁴⁴⁵ and he has no sympathy with the social snobbery of his daughter-in-law.⁴⁴⁶ It appears that Tate has tried to picture Major Buchan as one who clearly incarnates the "high forms" of Southern culture⁴⁴⁷--who as a member of a clearly defined class, the gentry, carries on a separate level of the culture--and at the same time as one who is not spiritually isolated from other classes.⁴⁴⁸

As minor foils, to set off the character of Buchan, Tate introduces other gentlemen, who do not measure up to the code of their class.⁴⁴⁹ Tate will not have his readers identify the Old

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 184.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 121.

⁴⁴⁷ See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 270-271.

⁴⁴⁸ See ibid., pp. 272-273. Major Buchan, as presented by Tate, seems to overcome the obstacles to spiritual unity within Southern culture--obstacles which Tate says the presence of the Negro caused. (See ibid.) Buchan seems to be Tate's Old Southern equivalent of the Spenglerian landed gentry. Buchan is, in Spenglerian terms, the kind of gentleman who is "the highest form" of the "peasantry." See Spengler, "The Downfall of Western Civilization," tr. Kenneth Burke, Dial, LXXVII (November, 1924), 499.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. examples of decadent or false aristocracy in Andrew N. Lytle's and Robert Penn Warren's fiction: Lytle, The Long Night, p. 122; Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time (New York, 1950), p. 19.

Southern gentleman with the sportsman-libertine or the self-worshipping pretender to genealogical prestige. Such critical readers Tate has anticipated by making the characters of John Langton and Jarman Posey caricatures which the narrator (Lacy Buchan) ridicules or condemns. (By means of these satiric portraits, Tate keeps the surface of his novel from looking like mere eulogy of the Old Southern gentleman. But the satiric portraits do not keep the novel from being a eulogy of the kind of Old Southern gentleman presumably typified by Major Buchan.)⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁵⁰ Tate's mode of using satire in The Fathers differs significantly from his mode of using satire in some of his poems castigating twentieth-century man. In The Fathers the ideal form of the Old Southern gentleman is present (in the shape of Major Buchan) to suggest the high behavior for which Old Southern society was capable of providing the scene. But in such poems as "To the Lacedaemonians" and "Adaptation of a Theme by Catullus" Tate presents twentieth-century men and their culture as having no redeeming features whatsoever. The two latter poems are simply vehicles for Tate's denunciation of a world which he thinks is enslaved by speed and cash values. (See Tate, Poems: 1922-1947, pp. 14-18, 204.) In these poems Tate seems unable to assume that modern society is a "normal manifestation of human life" or that the "ordinary social relations" of his twentieth-century characters are "at least as inevitable" as some other kinds of social relations. His style and point of view are purely "satirical." He thus exemplifies in these poems the kind of approach to society which he has disparaged in other writers whose subject-matter was Southern society. The "fundamental malaise" of the modern Southern writer, Tate has said, is "his inability . . . to look upon his society as a normal manifestation of human life." Such an "inability," says Tate, has resulted in a "confusion of purpose that keeps the modern Southern writer's . . . style and point of view on the defensive or satirical plane." See Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 415. Tate's whole point of view in The Fathers (a work on the Old South rather than twentieth-century America) is decidedly not satiric: the character of Major Buchan is a focus for Tate's feeling that Old Southern society was a "normal manifestation of human life." Tate, The Fathers, passim; and Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 415. See also Allen Tate, "Regionalism and Sectionalism," New Republic, LXIX (December 23, 1931), 160, for a statement throwing light upon the sense in which Tate's later novel The Fathers may be taken as "implicit propaganda" for Old Southern society. Tate's approach to Old Southern society resembles the approach which he attributes to Stark Young. Ibid.

John Langton, pseudo-gentleman and habitual leader of tournaments, is described by narrator Lacy Buchan (son of the true gentleman) as

a perpetual bachelor and sportsman who, it was said, had never read a book and could hardly write a letter, who knew nothing but whisky, horses and foxhounds, . . . a bold and insolent man who deemed himself an aristocrat beyond any consideration for other people.⁴⁵¹

Jarman Posey, uncle of George Posey, epitomizes what Tate would doubtless have us take to be a second heretical departure from the tradition of the gentleman. Younger brother of Rozier Posey (George Posey's father), who had moved away from the land to live in Georgetown, Maryland, Mr. Jarman Posey (like Poe's Roderick Usher) "had had so long an assured living that he no longer knew that it had a natural source in human activity."⁴⁵² Desirous of being a man of letters, Jarman has retired to the fourth floor of the Posey establishment, where his meditations will not be interrupted by the everyday world. When Lacy Buchan visits Mr. Jarman's room (for the first time) to inform him that his sister-in-law (Mrs. Rozier Posey) is dead and that his niece (Jane Posey) has apparently been attacked, Mr. Jarman never gives Lacy a chance to report the double tragedy. Mr. Jarman simply seizes the conversation and talks in a most absurd fashion, first, about his own literary work

⁴⁵¹ Tate, The Fathers, p. 62.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 178.

and, second, about the Poseys' ancestors. This passage in The Fathers constitutes one of the most amusing satiric portraits to be found in Tate's writings.⁴⁵³

As various critics have observed, one major interest of The Fathers lies in the contrast between the way of life of Major Buchan's family and that of the Posey family.⁴⁵⁴ The Buchans still live on the land (though somewhat precariously, as their soil is no longer very productive);⁴⁵⁵ George Posey is of a family which, in his father's time, had moved to town.⁴⁵⁶ Major Buchan's life is almost wholly defined by the inherited code of a landed gentleman;⁴⁵⁷ George Posey finds totally meaningless the rituals by which the landed people live.⁴⁵⁸ In the Buchans' world, class is defined by the "place" where a family lives and by a "certain code of behavior"; in Posey's world, men are beginning to be defined by the amount of money they have or by the things they sell.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵³ Ibid., pp. 232-235.

⁴⁵⁴ See, for example, Arthur Mizener, "'The Fathers' and Realistic Fiction," Accent, VII (Winter, 1947), 101-109; Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 135-137; and Stewart, "The Fugitive-Agrarian Writers: A History and a Criticism," pp. 375ff.

⁴⁵⁵ Tate, The Fathers, p. 20.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 28-40, 185, et passim.

⁴⁵⁸ See, for example, ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 136-137.

One significant result of Tate's constant implication (via his narrator in The Fathers) that George Posey is living apart from the Old Southern tradition of the landed people, is the reinforcement of the idea that George's manner of dealing with slaves violates the conventions governing the master-slave relationship. Presiding in judgment over Posey's sale of the slaves for whom Major Buchan has asked him to execute manumission papers⁴⁶⁰ is the image of Buchan's own relatively generous and affectionate treatment of his Negroes. Major Buchan's behavior is in many ways admirable. He makes the arrangement to free some of the slaves he no longer needs;⁴⁶¹ he treats the house servants with courtesy and kindness. He never uses nicknames for his slaves;⁴⁶² he always invites his old slave Coriolanus to sit down and rest after the dusting is finished; he takes the hand of his wife's aged female slave and gives her a place of precedence at his wife's funeral; and, as a concomitant of his own noncommercial attitude toward his slaves, he cherishes an abiding contempt of Negro traders. In the Buchan household, so far as we are able to see, slavery is no money-making institution; rather, it is an Institution for the Care and Comfort of Colored Folks. It seems not unnatural that Coriolanus should

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 30. Tate may have picked up this detail from a description of Jefferson Davis's refusal to call slaves by nicknames--a description given in Walter L. Fleming, "Jefferson Davis, the Negroes, and the Negro Problem," Louisiana State University Bulletin, 6th series, no. 4 (October, 1908), pp. 4-5.

say "I don't want to live no longer than de major do. I nussed him. Ten yare older to de day."⁴⁶³ We may be tempted to say that in The Fathers Tate has made slavery seem one of the "normal" ways of life.⁴⁶⁴ Even though (as we shall see later) a central episode in The Fathers records the violence growing, in part, out of a relationship between a slave and a master, The Fathers contains, at its core, the same kind of laudatory image of the slave-master relation as the image which Tate gave in some of his earlier nonfictional comments on slavery. (In this respect Tate's novel differs significantly from Robert Penn Warren's recent novel Band of Angels. Warren's Band of Angels is, in a way that Tate's The Fathers is not, a critique of some oversimplified evaluations of race relations--oversimplified evaluations like those which Tate, Lytle, and Davidson, certainly, and in some measure Warren himself, put forth in the years of the Vanderbilt Agrarians' most vigorous anti-Northern propaganda activities.)⁴⁶⁵

Having established Major Buchan's treatment of the slaves as a sort of norm, Tate is able, for the moment, through his narrator, to make the inhumane behavior of George Posey toward the Negroes seem, not a natural expression of the institution

⁴⁶³ Tate, The Fathers, pp. 126, 101, 163, 281.

⁴⁶⁴ See p. 412_n of this dissertation.

⁴⁶⁵ See the following pages of this dissertation: pp. 142_n, 216-226, 245, 247_n, 389_n, 443_n, and 454.

of slavery,⁴⁶⁶ but a departure from the implied ethics of slavery. George Posey is presented as one who translates all things into money--everything, in fact, from Pleasant Hill (the Buchan estate which he runs on a "business" basis)⁴⁶⁷ to Yellow Jim, his own half-brother and slave, who is to George merely "'liquid capital'"--a thing to be sold for cash.⁴⁶⁸ As George appears (through Lacy's vision) in the novel, he is made to seem less the exponent of slavery than the forerunner of the modern businessman--particularly the meaner sort of businessman. John Semmes, violent Southern Rights politician, remarks that George will give a beggar ten dollars but "'won't pay his free labor enough to buy bacon and meal.'" According to John Semmes, George's way of expressing a dislike of slavery is simply to sell the slaves. Some of the slaves whom he retains he puts to work at commercial fishing.⁴⁶⁹ Whatever his method of dealing with his labor, slave or free, his one purpose is to make money.

Curiously enough, Lionel Trilling, the prominent critic, overlooks Tate's implicit approval of the supposed code of

⁴⁶⁶ Tate is not so careful to do justice to the twentieth-century labor system when he alludes to it in Jefferson Davis. Tate does not hesitate to make the debasement of the public taste seem to be the natural and inevitable outgrowth of the twentieth-century industrial labor system. See Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

⁴⁶⁷ Tate, The Fathers, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 54. For other examples of Tate's emphasis on George Posey's money-mindedness, see ibid., pp. 83, 251.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 82, 135-136.

slavery (as exemplified in Buchan's behavior) in The Fathers. In his review of The Fathers Trilling declares that the "fable" or story of the novel would seem to be a "perfect indictment" of the Old Southern regime. Trilling refers especially to the events connected with George Posey's selling his slave half-brother (Yellow Jim) for cash with which to buy a mare. Noting both that Tate has often criticized the Old South and that he has nevertheless made clear in his essays that he "attaches the greatest value to the tradition he seems to attack," Trilling feels compelled to search The Fathers for evidence of what Tate admires in the Old Southern tradition. Concluding that "[a]pparently it comes down to the tone and manner of the old South--to its style,"⁴⁷⁰ Trilling overlooks the fact that the novel attributes to the Old South an ethic which, without repudiating slavery, passes judgment on the behavior of George Posey. Commenting on Trilling's review, Tate says he "has been trying to see why Trilling thinks" the "fable" of The Fathers is an "indictment of the Old South." Tate then makes this astonishing admission: "I think it may as easily be seen as a justification of it." Reaffirming his allegiance to the Old South, Tate continues: "In making an historical comparison of the South with the other sections of the country, I've always felt that the ante-bellum values had a good deal to offer us, not in terms of an ideally perfect society, but rather in terms

⁴⁷⁰ Trilling, "Allen Tate as Novelist," Partisan Review, VI (Fall, 1938), 112.

of what we are likely to get in fact." Tate does not specify that he is speaking of the values in the supposedly patriarchal ethics of slavery. Whether or not these are the "ante-bellum values" Tate has in mind in this explanatory comment on The Fathers,⁴⁷¹ it is clear that the novel itself does provide a judgment on George, not from the viewpoint of twentieth-century democratic values, but from the viewpoint of a society of fixed relationships between white and black. Having observed the affectionate, relatively nonexploitive behavior of Major Buchan toward his slaves, we are prepared for the duration of this novel to see slavery as essentially a patriarchal institution. George Posey's sale of his brother appears in the novel as an act in defiance of the traditional ethics of slavery. The object of Tate's so-called "perfect indictment"⁴⁷² is by no means the institution of slavery nor the honorific tradition of the Old Southern slaveholder; on the contrary, Tate exposes to censure behavior which is made to look like a violation of the morality of slavery.

Yet in the end Tate's indictment is not quite perfect. He overreaches himself when he has his narrator, Lacy Buchan, imply that if Yellow Jim had never been sold, if he had only been retained as a house servant, all might have been well. Before the sale, declares Lacy, "Yellow Jim had been in the full

⁴⁷¹ Allen Tate, "Allen Tate on 'The Fathers,'" Partisan Review, VII (Winter, 1939), 125.

⁴⁷² Lionel Trilling's phrase. Trilling, "Allen Tate as Novelist," Partisan Review, VI (Fall, 1938), 112.

sense a member of the Posey family, and the peculiarity of his situation as a slave [i.e., the fact that he was the illegitimate son of Rozier Posey] in no wise diminished his loyalty or even his complete participation in the family life: it had rather intensified it."⁴⁷³ In allowing this remark to Lacy, Tate puts himself in the position of seeming to be a propagandist for the tradition of the Old Southern slaveholder. Tate's narrator has made clear throughout the middle portions of the novel that the Poseys have no family life--that they are a collection of inhuman egotists.⁴⁷⁴ It is entirely incredible that in such a household any slave should have felt that he "belonged," in the sense that he was a part of a family life. Lacy's claim that Yellow Jim was "in the full sense a member of the Posey family"⁴⁷⁵ permits Tate's readers to raise a question which a mere contrast between Buchan's patriarchal behavior and George's money-motivated action would never have provoked in so embarrassing a form. That question is the following: Is Tate implying in his fiction (as he does in some of his history)⁴⁷⁶ that insofar as a tie of association of even the hollowest sort existed between master and slave, the institution of slavery must be judged superior to a system in which the contact or tie between capital and labor is the cash nexus?

⁴⁷³ Tate, The Fathers, p. 206.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 99, 100, 170, 172, 173, 174, 177-179.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

⁴⁷⁶ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 43.

Tate's final concern in The Fathers is not merely to point out contrasts between Major Buchan (the representative of Southern tradition) and George Posey (the anti-traditional man). He is also concerned to engage the Buchan and Posey families in a dramatic involvement with each other, to show the tragedy which unfolds with the penetration of the Buchan family by the codeless George Posey, and to point out an interpenetration between the Buchan family's private tragedy and the tragedy which was beginning to be played in the South in 1861. In conformity with the convention of the tragic flaw, Tate permits his hero Buchan to have a significant fault. Buchan's flaw is a certain innocence and passivity. This innocence and passivity lead Buchan to surrender his daughter's hand and then the control of his property⁴⁷⁷ to a villain who lacks the patriarchal ethics and is indeed chiefly driven by sheer egotism and money-making instincts.

The private disasters of the Buchan family stem from Susan Buchan's marriage to this villain, George Posey. Susan, having come to hate George for his secretiveness, for his absorption in activities which he does not share with her, and for allied reasons at which the narrator only hints,⁴⁷⁸ determines to

⁴⁷⁷ Possibly the closest that Tate comes to criticizing Buchan in the novel is the remark which is allowed to a small farmer, Mr. Regan, on the consequences of Buchan's having "sign[ed] . . . [his] prop'ty away." Though Regan obviously admires Major Buchan, he cannot approve of his turning over the control of his property to another. See Tate, The Fathers, p. 264.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 185 et passim.

prevent her brother (Semmes Buchan) from marrying Jane Posey. In preventing a second Buchan from marrying into the Posey family, Susan's instrument is Yellow Jim, George's mulatto half-brother, who has been prepared for his role by George's having sold him and by Jane Posey's hysterical fear of him.⁴⁷⁹ Apparently with Susan's mysterious preknowledge, Yellow Jim enters the bedrooms of George's mother and his own half-sister Jane, frightening the first to death by his mere presence and laying violent hands upon the second.⁴⁸⁰ The sequels to these disasters are Semmes Buchan's killing Yellow Jim (not in passion but in accordance with the code prescribing that he slay the violator of his fiancée), George Posey's impulsively killing Semmes,⁴⁸¹ and Susan Posey's going mad.⁴⁸² Such are the evils which flow from Major Buchan's failure to prevent his daughter Susan from marrying George Posey.

Interwoven with these private evils are the evils which flow from Major Buchan's failure to ally himself with the Confederate cause in the early months of 1861.⁴⁸³ Tate's linking

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 202-209.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 225-230, 236.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., p. 258.

⁴⁸² Ibid., p. 277.

⁴⁸³ For material relevant to Major Buchan's opposition to secession, see ibid., pp. 31, 123, 129, 140, 151, 176-177.

of the two sets of evils⁴⁸⁴ has led two commentators to see historical symbolism in Buchan's relation to Posey. The first of these commentators (both of whom admire The Fathers immensely) is Walter Sullivan. Buchan's failure to foresee and prevent the ruin which George Posey would bring into the Buchan family is taken by Sullivan to signify the inadequacy of Buchan's code to warn him of the dangers threatening the South from within. According to Sullivan, the novel shows how the South's tragic flaw was the fact that its ethic was rooted in politics rather than religion. Sullivan's implication is that if the South's tradition had been rooted in religion the South could have disciplined its George Poseys and made them ineffectual; furthermore, Sullivan apparently assumes that if Buchan's code had been rooted in religion rather than in politics Buchan would have "cast his lot" not with the Union but with the Confederacy.⁴⁸⁵

Arthur Mizener, a second eulogist of The Fathers, juxtaposes (as if they were intimately connected) comment on Buchan's inability to cope with George Posey and comment on Major Buchan's "innocence of the possibility of a competitive society"--an innocence which, says Mizener, "makes [Buchan]. . . helpless

⁴⁸⁴ The concrete link between the private and the public disasters in which the Buchan family become involved is Major Buchan's disinheriting of his son Semmes, because of Semmes's espousal of the Confederate cause. Buchan later comes to believe that his disinheriting Semmes drove Semmes to go to Jane Posey with a proposal of immediate marriage. Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁸⁵ Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 137.

before the financial conception of property and the anarchic violence of civil war."⁴⁸⁶

It is clear that both Sullivan and Mizener have borrowed from Tate's critical writings on the meaning of the Civil War and the character of the Old Southern tradition.⁴⁸⁷ The novel itself does not state that the North stood for the "financial conception of property" or a "competitive society";⁴⁸⁸ nor does it in any way make us see that a code rooted in a proper religion would have made Buchan ally himself with the Lower Southern cotton men whose secessionist activities he deplored. The novel simply shows us that in the end Buchan is killed by Union soldiers who order him to leave his house and whom he defies without telling them he has been a Unionist. The fact that the Union soldiers not only kill the major but also burn his old slave Coriolanus⁴⁸⁹ establishes the brutality of some Northerners, but it shows nothing of Northern acquisitiveness or competitiveness in general. Indeed, the novel gives a more specific detail implying the acquisitiveness of the Lower Southerners than it does about the acquisitiveness of the North. This detail is the narrator's remark that his cousin John Semmes

⁴⁸⁶ Mizener, "'The Fathers' and Realistic Fiction," Accent, VII (Winter, 1947), 105.

⁴⁸⁷ See especially Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 168-169, 173-174; Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? pp. 80-93.

⁴⁸⁸ The quoted phrases are from Mizener, "'The Fathers' and Realistic Fiction," Accent, VII (Winter, 1947), 105.

⁴⁸⁹ Tate, The Fathers, pp. 304-305.

(a Virginian) prides himself on having freed his few slaves "to keep from raising more negroes to be sold into the canebrakes of the Mississippi."⁴⁹⁰ The implication is that this Virginian considers the Lower Southern canebrakes to be characterized by a less patriarchal form of slavery than his own Virginia variety. We may wonder whether Tate intended irony in the fact that this Virginian is John Semmes, fire-eating politician, whose agitation for "Southern Rights" allies him with the Lower Southern cotton fields and canebrakes. We may wonder finally, too, why Tate has chosen to write a novel making a George Posey rather than some violent Lower Southern secessionist agitator (such as a Robert Barnwell Rhett or a James D. B. De Bow) or some frontier strong man (such as a Bedford Forrest) a symbol of a flaw within the South--a spirit of acquisitiveness and self-centeredness which men like Major Buchan found it difficult to keep in "abeyance."⁴⁹¹ George Posey, whose way of life is surely no more acquisitive than the life of the Southwestern trader and planter Bedford Forrest, functions in the novel as a whipping boy (in modern businessman's guise) bearing the blame for faults which might just as properly be attributed to the successful and would-be planter-businessmen, or the violently pro-Southern agitators, of the Cotton Kingdom--figures who might well have been made into a

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁹¹ The quoted word and the idea that the South had a flaw are derived from Sullivan, "Southern Novelists and the Civil War," Hopkins Review, VI (Winter, 1953), 136-138.

symbol of the acquisitive spirit central to the Southern slaveholders' agricultural system. Had Tate chosen to make some typical strong man of the Cotton Kingdom his symbol of the South's flaw, his novel The Fathers could scarcely be accused of being a defense of the Old Southern social order's withdrawal from the Union.

VII. THE EXTERNAL CHALLENGE: ABOLITIONISM

In the end, the selfish spirit lurking at the core of the slaveholding agricultural system takes a revenge on Tate and certain other Vanderbilt Traditionalists who have frequently tried to ignore, overlook, or minimize some of the evils in that spirit. In the historical record of the Civil War, that selfish spirit makes itself visible and torments some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists with evidence that the Confederacy suffered from a rigidly self-centered defense of slavery. Owsley, for instance, is painfully aware that much of the Confederacy's diplomacy was conducted by men whose famous, or even infamous, records of pro-slavery agitation hardly did the Southern cause good in the eyes of the countries to which they

were dispatched.⁴⁹² Lytle expresses the opinion that the cause of the South was harmed by the conscription law's exempting from military service planters who had twenty Negroes to manage.⁴⁹³ Tate expresses the same opinion--though with the qualification that the exemption was "theoretically sound."⁴⁹⁴ Most interesting of all, in the light of Owsley's and Tate's treatment of the slavery question when they discuss Jefferson and Calhoun,⁴⁹⁵ are Owsley's statement that Confederate diplomacy should have been established on the principle of eventual

⁴⁹² Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy, pp. 52-53, 92-93, 95. Owsley's handling of William Lowndes Yancey as a diplomat is more realistic than Tate's. Tate (though he admits Yancey's disposition was unsuited to diplomacy) ignores Yancey's extreme pro-slavery record and says that Yancey was "embarrassed" in his diplomatic mission (in London) by Alexander H. Stephens' "mudsill" speech. (See Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 92-93, 119. See also p. 210 of this dissertation.) Owsley, in contrast to Tate, emphasizes that Yancey was "internationally known as a champion of slavery" and that he "was known to have urged for years the reopening of the slave trade so that enough slaves might be spread over the South and made sufficiently cheap for every adult person to acquire at least one slave." Owsley raises pragmatic objections to the choice of the slavery-propagandist Yancey as diplomatic agent:

"Believing slavery not only to be right but a positive blessing to humanity, the Confederate leaders could naturally ill afford to assume an apologetic attitude toward the institution which was the corner stone of their new state. On the other hand, to dispatch as chief of the diplomatic mission a man who advocated a militant attitude on the slave trade was extremely naïve or extremely arrogant and, whether the one or the other, very disregarding of the strong antislavery sentiment of both England and France [Yancey's] championship of the reopening of the slave trade and his proslavery career disqualified him as a diplomatic agent in a land of abolitionists." Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy, pp. 52, 53.

⁴⁹³ Lytle, Bedford Forrest, p. 356.

⁴⁹⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 136.

⁴⁹⁵ See pp. 117-126, 207-208, 216ff, and 230 of this dissertation.

emancipation of the slaves⁴⁹⁶ and Tate's implication that since the issue was whether the North should use the slaves against the South or the South use them against the North, the slaves should have been inducted into the Confederate army and should even have been given their freedom in return for their performance of military service.⁴⁹⁷ Even Lytle (who has been most illiberal on slavery and the Negro)⁴⁹⁸ has, in one of his novels, passages which show in contrasting tones two kinds of planters: the good planter who, wounded in battle, asks his slaves to support him in his last charge and promises them their freedom if they survive;⁴⁹⁹ and the selfish planters who refuse to let their slaves be used by the army as teamsters and cooks.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy, p. 549.

⁴⁹⁷ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 241, 276. Tate appears to accept the judgment of Governor William Smith of Virginia in this matter. He also notes General Robert E. Lee's opinion (expressed early in 1865) that the "emergency was so pressing as to render the question of 'slavery immaterial' and that to 'secure the efficiency and fidelity of . . . [an] auxiliary force' [of Negroes], the measure [permitting induction of slaves into the Confederate army] should be accompanied by 'a well-digested plan of gradual and general emancipation.'" Ibid., p. 276.

Approval of emancipation on condition of service in the Confederate army is not necessarily a sign of a liberal democratic viewpoint. Hamilton James Eckenrode, whose highly unliberal "Nordicist" views are summarized in footnote 309 on p. 369 of this dissertation, anticipated Tate in criticizing Confederate politicians for refusing to enlist black men or to agree to emancipation as a reward for enlistment. See Eckenrode, Jefferson Davis, pp. 325-326, 339.

⁴⁹⁸ See pp. 131-134 of this dissertation.

⁴⁹⁹ Lytle, The Long Night, p. 318.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 196. Lytle may have gotten from Owsley the inspiration for this implied criticism of selfish planters who were unwilling to let their slaves be used in the Confederacy's behalf. See Owsley, State Rights in the Confederacy, pp. 264-265.

If Tate's and other Vanderbilt Traditionalists' statements on the slavery issue during the Civil War could be isolated from their remarks on the issue as it developed during the forty years preceding the War, we might suspect that they could help us see how the Old South's determination to keep the Negro down contributed to the Old South's death. But when we survey the remarks of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists on the question of abolition as it was raised in the years before the War, we find that they are preoccupied with attacking the Abolitionists rather than with suggesting how the South might have softened the rigidity of its racial structure before the tensions between North and South developed into a Civil War.

Owsley, Davidson, and Tate are united in their contempt for most of the Abolitionists whom they mention. By the manner in which they present Abolitionism, Owsley and Davidson (and to a lesser extent Tate) imply not only that the Old Southerner was justified in his belligerent attitude toward anti-slavery propaganda, but also that the twentieth-century Southerner is justified in opposing interference with the bi-racial system of the South. Owsley and Davidson work out an analogy between the nineteenth-century Abolitionists and the present opponents of segregation. Their allusions to the Abolitionists have a definite practical aim: the discrediting of outsiders who object to the persistence of the twentieth-century South in its bi-racial system. Davidson's and Owsley's pictures of Abolitionism indicate clearly the manner in which they exploit history to promote the social policy that they say is right or inevitable for the present-day South.

A major point in Owsley's indictment of the Abolitionists is the suggestion that they were mere agents of the selfish industrialists. Owsley and Davidson credit the Abolitionists specifically with creating the "war psychosis" which furnished the context within which a bloody civil war could be fought.⁵⁰¹ With varying degrees of carefulness in phrasing and documentation, Owsley and Tate hint or state outright that the Abolitionist crusade furnished a moral panoply⁵⁰² behind which the Northern financial and industrial interests waged a cold war and then a hot war against the Southern agricultural order. Tate puts the matter in discreetly ironic---and safely vague---terms:

In 1816 the tariff issue became acute, and within five years Abolitionist societies were gathering in the North. The relation between these two interesting phenomena may be a subject of dispute, but at the same time it is an object of suspicion.⁵⁰³

In one of his essays Owsley maintains without qualification

⁵⁰¹ Frank L. Owsley, "The American Triangle," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (January, 1935), 118. For other expressions of this idea, see also the following: Owsley, "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History, VII (February, 1941), 15-16; Donald Davidson, "Where Are the Laymen? A Study in Policy-Making," American Review, IX (October, 1937), 474.

⁵⁰² Tate uses the phrase "panoply of moral purpose." Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 47.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., pp. 300-301. Tate apparently intends to imply that the Abolitionist societies of the early 1820's were obscurely linked with industrial interests in the North. It is amusing to reflect on the well-known fact that Tate's agrarian hero, Calhoun, supported the tariff of 1816. According to Tate's dating of the rise of Abolitionist societies in the North, it was only after the slavery issue was raised that Calhoun retreated from his support of the "American System" and developed the doctrine of nullification.

that "great industrial and financial groups set good but ill-informed men upon a crusade against slavery in the South, where it was already destined through economic causes to disappear rapidly." Owsley does not indicate in this essay the date at which these groups "set" the "good but ill-informed men" on their crusade, although he implies that they did so prior to the rise of the Republican party.⁵⁰⁴ In another essay, he suggests that the industrialists fostered the Abolition crusade during all the forty years prior to the Civil War. In reference to the struggle by Eastern industrialists between 1819 and 1860 to convert as many of the Western territories as possible into free states, Owsley declares:

the industrialists, carefully coached by their lawyers and statesmen and "intellectual" aides, realized the bad strategy of waging a frank struggle for sectional power; they must pitch the struggle upon a moral plane, else many of the intelligentia [sic] and the good people generally might become squeamish and refuse to fight. Shibboleths and moral catch-words must be furnished. It was therefore found convenient to attack slavery as an evil and the slaveholder as a criminal, in fact to impugn the morality of the South, in order to create opinion in the East and North in favour of the industrialists' plans of Southern restriction. The practical program of the industrialists was to prevent further creation of slave States from the vast territories which had been acquired by the United States from France, Spain, and Mexico. The political history of the period from 1819 to 1860 is largely the story of the exclusion of the South from the Territories. To hold public

⁵⁰⁴ Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? p. 58. Elsewhere Owsley stresses the ignorance of the Abolitionists and does not much remark on their goodness. Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 79-80.

opinion to the support of this program the abolition crusade against the South was waged for over forty years.⁵⁰⁵

In other statements, Owsley--and Andrew N. Lytle and Robert Penn Warren--are more circumspect in sketching the time and manner of the collaboration between Eastern industrialists and the Abolitionists.⁵⁰⁶

But Owsley shows very little circumspectness in working out a parallel between the industrialists' sponsorship of the Abolition crusade and their sponsorship of a "Third Crusade"--the "Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction."⁵⁰⁷ Discussing the agitation in the early 1930's for "'justice to the Negro'

⁵⁰⁵ Frank L. Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition," American Review, I (June, 1933), 261. *Italics mine.* It is entertaining to note that even Robert Penn Warren who accepts the thesis that abolitionism ultimately was used by the industrialists, states that as late as 1856 "[m]oney making and Abolitionism were still to a certain degree mutually exclusive." Warren, John Brown, p. 227. Owsley probably presses too hard his contention that the abolitionists were, from 1819 on, the puppets of the industrialists. He also appears to confound mere opposition to the extension of slavery with all kinds of proposals to end slavery in the states in which it already existed.

⁵⁰⁶ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 79-80, 83-84; Lytle, Bedford Forrest, pp. 29-31; Warren, John Brown, pp. 33, 227, et passim.

⁵⁰⁷ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 257. See Davidson, The Tennessee, II, 204-211, for another account of the Scottsboro case.

One wonders whether Davidson includes himself in his description of how Tennessee Valley conservatives reacted to the Northern interference in, and comment on, the Scopes anti-evolution trial in Dayton, Tennessee (July-September, 1925) and the trial (beginning at Scottsboro, Alabama, in April, 1931) of nine Negroes on charges of rape. Davidson says that "the conservative group . . . began to wonder whether they had been wise in making as great concessions as had already been made. They remembered the tales of their grandfathers, reread the history books, and began to resent the entire modern regime." See Davidson, The Tennessee, II, 210-211.

as exemplified in the Scottsboro affair,"⁵⁰⁸ Owsley puts his finger on those responsible for the attack on the South. At the head of his list are the industrialists.

Those engaged in this new crusade of "justice for the Negro" in Southern courts may be divided into the four classes so characteristic of abolitionism . . . first, the industrialists themselves, either capitalists or Communists, with their smart lawyers and publicity advisers, retained on salary, who work out the program; second, the journalists, publicists, novelists, poets, preachers, professors, who work as paid propagandists . . . ; third, those who, being victimized by stories of Southern outrages, take up their pens to write in anger against the South, against which they already harbour an animosity inherited from former attacks; finally, the public at large, uncritical, lacking in either historical information or historical sense, ready because of its inherited dislike of the South to believe the worst of that section.⁵⁰⁹

Owsley cites some printed documents bearing Communist labels in support of his charge that the Communist-industrialists wish to stir up strife between the Negroes and the whites.⁵¹⁰ As for the capitalist-industrialists, he makes the following admission: "That [they] . . . have declared war upon the South is a conclusion based partly upon circumstantial evidence and analogy."⁵¹¹ As a matter of fact, Owsley's cites no evidence other than circumstance and analogy. He relies more heavily

⁵⁰⁸ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 259.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 276. Owsley also discusses here Northern industrialists' interference with racial matters in the South during reconstruction.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 275-284.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p. 275.

on analogy. His case can be summarized as follows: In the nineteenth century, industrialists wanted to break the Southern agricultural order politically, so they set the abolitionists on a crusade against the South; in the 1930's, industrialism is insecure (an "alliance" of South and West "overthrew" the "industrialists' party" in 1932),⁵¹² so the capitalist-industrialists are again trying to bring the South's social order into disrepute.⁵¹³ Owsley's argument was a convenient one for a Southerner who believed, in the 1930's, that "history" justified the continuation of the all-white jury system.

A second major weapon in the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' campaign against Abolitionism is the argument ad hominem. Unflattering implications or direct statements about the motives or personalities of the Abolitionists abound in Tate's, Owsley's, and Warren's writings. Owsley makes a point of saying that one of the key abolitionists may be suspected of homosexuality.⁵¹⁴ Religious fanaticism and the blindness which comes from pride are much easier to detect among the Abolitionists than homosexuality is, and some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists make

⁵¹² Ibid., n. 274.

⁵¹³ Ibid., pp. 259, 260, 272, 273, 274, 276.

⁵¹⁴ Owsley, "Abolition and Secession," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (July, 1935), 642.

the most of their opportunities to show these latter traits in their worst light.⁵¹⁵

Among religiously inclined abolitionists, Harriet Beecher Stowe is particularly repellent to Warren⁵¹⁶ and Tate. Tate comments on her "queer book," Uncle Tom's Cabin:

Mrs. Stowe had never been in the South: she had spent a few days in Kentucky, just south of Cincinnati. Her book was a picture of Southern plantation life. It had great influence on the popular imagination of the North. It was very minute in detail. Somebody asked her how she knew about Southern life. She said she didn't need to know. She said God had given her all the scenes in a vision. Mrs. Stowe had come from New England, where her theocratic ancestors had urged the selling of the Indians into slavery. That was a kindness, they had said. The Indians were practitioners of the Black Art. In New England God was never wrong.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 57; Warren, John Brown, pp. 229-230; Frank L. Owsley, "Origins of the American Civil War," Southern Review, V (Spring, 1940), 626.

⁵¹⁶ Warren, John Brown, p. 102.

⁵¹⁷ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 55-56. Although Tate makes Mrs. Stowe's methods of composition seem ridiculous, his own criticism of Uncle Tom's Cabin seems to fall into the much talked-of "heresy" of the sociological approach to literature--an approach against which some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists have argued strenuously. Tate would probably object to any such "sociological" criticism of Robert Penn Warren's novel At Heaven's Gate. The sectional question would not, of course, arise in reference to Warren's novel, but we can imagine an irate businessman resenting the "picture" of business operations given in Warren's novel--and objecting on the grounds that the author had an insufficient acquaintance with the business world. See Warren, At Heaven's Gate, pp. 7, 8, 67, 220-222, 265-271, 282-283, 341-344, 373, 390-391, et passim. For samples of Vanderbilt Traditionalists' objections to "sociological" criticism, see the following: Ransom [Review of Forces in American Criticism, by Bernard Smith], Free America, IV (January, 1940), 19-20; Allen Tate, "Procrustes and the Poet," New Republic, CIV (January 6, 1941), 25-26.

John Brown, the most violent of those Abolitionists who were religious fanatics, receives a thorough and, on the whole, convincing indictment from Warren. Warren's biography presents Brown as a tremendous egotist to whom self-justification by appeal to the will of God had become second nature. Warren summarizes Brown's career in the following terms:

John Brown doted too much on being head of the heap. As the years passed he had tried many ways to get to the head and had failed and failed again, but with each failure the desire had become more insatiable, more absolute. The desire was susceptible to dishonesty, to vindictive and ruthless brutality. He laid open his Old Testament on his knees and read: "I hate vain thoughts, but thy laws do I love"; "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh in vain"; "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them"; and then at last, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission." It was all there--the Word, the Law. And his own will and God's will were one. Hypocrisy is too easy a word to use here, and too simple. If John Brown had no scruple at deception it was because the end justified the means. The end had justified so much in his life--embezzlement, theft, lying, cruelty, murder. That end, that goal, which beckoned year after year, seemed to float and shift and change its shape like some mirage. In other words, John Brown's enormous egotism expressed itself in one set of terms after another, and after Harper's Ferry there would be a final transposition of this egotism into new terms. In his past history these terms had become larger, more impersonal, more dignified, and justification under them had become easier. It is hard to justify the embezzlement of the New England Woolen Mills' twenty-eight hundred dollars and the prayerful letter to his wife on the subject, just as it is hard to justify any piece of vulgarity. It was necessary to invoke "Liberty" in Kansas; in Virginia it was almost gratuitous to do so, for the theft of a state justifies itself. Does man's will need justification beyond the will of God?⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸ Warren, John Brown, pp. 350-351.

A seeming echo of Warren's biography is Tate's satiric poem presenting John Brown as the man "who died to set Abstraction free." In one version of the poem Tate says, with heavy irony, that Brown "stole Washington's gold-handled sword/Less for the gold than for the Lord";⁵¹⁹ in another version, he says that Brown stole the sword "[f]or the common purpose of the Lord."⁵²⁰ Both versions of Tate's poem exploit the opportunity which Brown's behavior offers to the poet who would like to disparage humanitarian religion.

It must be admitted that John Brown is a rather suitable subject for a disparager of the fusion of religious and humanitarian impulses. But when Tate speaks of the Abolitionists as a group he is on less safe ground than he is in his indictments of John Brown. When he dwells on the peculiar self-righteousness not only of John Brown but of numbers of Abolitionists, Tate himself exhibits a certain blindness to Southern fanaticism on the slavery issue. Speaking of the early 1840's, Tate says:

Already there were rumors and some evidence of a powerful revolutionary party growing up in the North. This party as yet had no name of its own, but a great many people shared in a general feeling that would soon require a name. There were people in New England who wanted to destroy democracy and civil liberties in America by freeing the slaves. They were not very intelligent people; so they didn't know precisely what they wanted to destroy. They thought God had told them what to do. A Southern man knew better than this. He knew that God only told people to do right: He never told them what was right. These privy-to-God people were

⁵¹⁹ Allen Tate, "Historical Epigraph: On the Martyr of Harper's Ferry," Saturday Review of Literature, VI (May 10, 1930), 1021.

⁵²⁰ Allen Tate, "On the Martyr of Harper's Ferry," Sewanee Review, XXXVIII (Winter, 1930), 29.

sending little pamphlets down South telling Negroes, whom they had never seen, that they were abused.⁵²¹

Tate knows better than this. He knows that some ante-bellum Southerners justified slavery by the Bible, just as some modern Southerners justify segregation by citing the curse on Ham.⁵²² Elsewhere, when it is convenient to him to do so, Tate refers to some Southerners' defense of slavery by appeal to the Bible.⁵²³ When his immediate purpose is to discredit Broadus Mitchell's "determinism" (in saying that industrialism is coming to the South), Tate can compare Mitchell with the ante-bellum planter whose economic determinism was expressed in the formula that slavery was ordained by God.⁵²⁴ But at times when Tate is describing the Abolitionists, he seems not to realize that they had some provocation in the behavior and statements of Southerners.

As his peculiar contribution to the argument ad hominem directed by some Vanderbilt Traditionalists against abolitionism, Owsley accuses the Abolitionists of the sin of exaggerating the mote in the South's social system while ignoring the beam in the North's. On one occasion when Owsley is using this

⁵²¹ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 25. The italics are Tate's.

⁵²² God's curse on Noah's son, Ham, was sometimes cited in Alabama in the 1930's as evidence that the colored people were meant to be in a servile status. See Genesis 9:22-27.

⁵²³ Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 168.

⁵²⁴ Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 412.

particular argument ad hominem to discredit abolitionism, he himself apparently falls into the sin of making inadequately documented charges against the North's social system. "[When . . . the moralist crusaders of the Northeast were painting a picture of universal prostitution and miscegenation in the South," Owsley declares (in an article published in 1933), "information was available to these same moralists which showed sexual degradation in the factories of the East to have reached depths hitherto unknown in the experience of a modern civilized nation." Owsley goes on, himself, to picture in vivid colors the Abolitionists' obliviousness of the evil in Northern society: "Illegitimacy was more common in the industrialized East than in any country in the world. Yet these Abolitionist crusaders," Owsley continues, "offered little criticism of a society which forced young girls into semi-prostitution."⁵²⁵ Nowhere in this article does Owsley state the sources of his statistics on sexual degradation in the Northeast. He presents the statistics as unquestionable facts. We may suspect that his sources are ante-bellum pro-slavery writers.⁵²⁶ Reinforcing our suspicion is Owsley's own admission about the source of

⁵²⁵ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 262.

⁵²⁶ The question of Owsley's source for his statistical and moral statements about New England is made more interesting by the fact that Owsley criticizes historian Arthur C. Cole for relying on Abolitionist pamphlets to document "statistical and moral statements" about the South. See Frank L. Owsley, "The War of the Sections," Virginia Quarterly Review, X (October, 1934), 632.

similar (though somewhat more carefully qualified) statistics which he cites in an article published in 1940: the "pro-slavery writers . . . countered the Abolitionists' attack on Southern morals with the assertion--I cannot vouch for their statistics--that there was more illegitimacy in the factory towns of the East than in any other part of Western Europe or America,"⁵²⁷ Owsley declares. Why, we may ask, does Owsley acknowledge, and indicate the possible unreliability of, his sources in the article published in 1940 whereas in his article of 1933 he omits the source of the similar, but even more severe, indictment of New England morals? We cannot be sure of the answer to this question. We can, however, make some ugly conjectures. Perhaps his anger against the Abolitionists made him rash or irresponsible in evaluating his sources for the earlier article, whereas one of the purposes of his later article made it almost necessary that he should have his professional fences in good repair. One purpose of the later article is the discrediting of the historian Dwight L. Dumond for relying on anti-slavery sources for information about Old Southern society. It is a "shock to the historical sense when Mr. Dumond proclaims that the propaganda writings of the abolitionists are the most valid source from which to study slavery and Southern society,"⁵²⁸ Owsley self-righteously remarks in his article of 1940. Owsley forgets that in his own article

⁵²⁷ Owsley, "Origins of the American Civil War," Southern Review, V (Spring, 1940), 619. Italics mine.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p. 611.

of 1933 he did not even proclaim the source from which he himself had studied New England morality.⁵²⁹ As we have just seen, there is good reason to think that Owsley's source in this article of 1933 was the propaganda writings of the pro-slavery writers.

A case might be made out that the blindness of Northern Abolitionists is more than matched by the frequent blindness of Tate, Davidson, Lytle, and Owsley to the unpleasant arrogance of some Southern pro-slavery agitators.⁵³⁰ In general,⁵³¹ these Vanderbilt Traditionalists do not give much specific detail on the unattractive features of the extreme pro-slavery men. We could, for example, read a number of Owsley's articles and reviews dealing with the slavery issue prior to the Civil War and never guess that the pro-slavery agitators were as guilty

⁵²⁹ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 262.

⁵³⁰ See the following sources for wholly laudatory treatments of some extreme pro-slavery propagandists: Tate, "The Prophet of Secession," New Republic, LXXII (August 17, 1932), 25-26; Lytle, "John Taylor and the Political Economy of Agriculture," American Review, IV (November, 1934), 97-98.

⁵³¹ Exceptions are quoted on pp. 210, 231, and 427_n of this dissertation. Some other exceptions are cited on pp. 428 and 438 of this dissertation.

of the sin of pride as the Abolitionists were.⁵³² Similarly, we could read Tate's biography of Stonewall Jackson and find scarcely a word about the meanness of any pro-slavery man-- although we would find several pages demolishing the characters of the Abolitionists.⁵³³ Nor would we find in Tate's biography of Jefferson Davis any really concrete, pointed, and specific moral condemnation of Southern filibusterers, verbal defenders of slavery, or physical defenders of slavery (in Kansas). Such criticism of pro-slavery agitators as is found in Jefferson Davis is very mild and subdued as compared with Tate's vitriolic picture of the Abolitionists in Stonewall Jackson.⁵³⁴ Warren is fairer. Not only does he very specifically show up David R. Atchison⁵³⁵ and some of the other pro-slavery men in Kansas as being unnecessarily bloodthirsty when provoked;⁵³⁶ he also

⁵³² See, for example, the following: Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 79-83; Owsley, "The American Triangle," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (January, 1935), 113-118; Frank L. Owsley, "Slavery and the Struggle of the Sections," Yale Review XXIV (Spring, 1935), 643-644; Owsley, "Abolition and Secession," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (July, 1935), 461-466; Frank L. Owsley, [Review of Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857, ed. Dwight L. Dumond], Journal of Southern History, V (May, 1939), 263-264; Owsley, "Origins of the American Civil War," Southern Review, V (Spring, 1940), 609-626.

⁵³³ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 25, 55-58.

⁵³⁴ Tate's disapproval of Southerners' attempts to capture Kansas for slavery seems to be based primarily on practical, rather than on moral, considerations. For evidence of this fact and for an illustration of Tate's relative mildness in dealing with Southern filibusterers, see p. 80 of Tate, Jefferson Davis. Compare his tone there with his tone when he speaks of the Abolitionists. See Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 25, 55-58.

⁵³⁵ Warren, John Brown, p. 153.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., pp. 292-293.

admits, in passing, the admirable traits of one or two of the Abolitionists--even when he disapproves of their principles.⁵³⁷ He is generous enough to remark that such a woman as Harriet Tubman "had earned the name of 'Moses of her People'" by her "courage and ability as an 'underground railway' worker."⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Ibid., pp. 288, 421, 422. Warren's attempt to be fair-minded is further illustrated by his novel Band of Angels. Band of Angels is remarkable both for the manner in which it illustrates the truth of the Abolitionists' charges in regard to the sexual behavior of some slaveowners and for its picture of the nobility and the frailty or arrogance of some men who have been Abolitionists. In addition to some Oberlin Abolitionists (who are pictured as not knowing what they are talking about) the novel contains some New England Abolitionists--Leonidas Sears and his son, Tobias Sears--whose post-War attitudes are sketched. The father is no more than a stereotyped echo of Warren's thesis (in his John Brown, pp. 226-227) that "making money, wrestling with conscience, . . . talking about Transcendentalism, or being an Abolitionist" were manifestations of a "tight especial brand of New England romanticism." But Tobias is a more admirable figure. His idealism is an attempt to escape from the mire of a materialistic world. Unlike Warren's John Brown, Tobias even desires to prevent the use of violence as a means of making the Negroes' emancipation real. But lest Tobias illustrate a virtuous mode of attempting social reform, Warren rather mechanically brings about his fall into adultery and near-alcoholism, then redeems him, seemingly on condition that he ceases to think of himself as able to engage in large programs of social uplift. Warren's narrator (Tobias's wife) tells us that Tobias's redemption is accomplished by a change in his heart--the learning of a humility which makes him see that he is no more a saviour than is the lowliest victim of society. Although Warren manages in Band of Angels (as in John Brown) to emphasize that attempts to participate in mass reform may mask a proud heart, he is at least enough the humanitarian to suggest in the conclusion to Band of Angels his approval of a quixotic individual foray against injustice. If Band of Angels offers little to encourage the social reformer (of Abolitionist, or other, breed), it is at least comforting to the liberal to find that Warren can take as a sign of salvation the attitude with which Tobias personally champions an old Negro garbage-collector. See Warren, Band of Angels, pp. 8, 29-38, 257-258, 260, 293, 344, 353, 365-375.

⁵³⁸ Warren, John Brown, p. 277.

Tate, more absolute than Warren, can only make a blanket condemnation of the Abolitionists who "helped runaway negroes get away to Canada." Unlike Warren, he makes no distinctions between the motives of those who assisted fugitive slaves. Of all who gave assistance, Tate can only say: "They openly disobeyed the laws of the United States. The Fugitive Slave Law required Northern men to return wandering Southern property⁵³⁹ to their owners. The Northern men refused."⁵⁴⁰

Donald Davidson is particularly effective in stressing the unpleasant personal characteristics of the twentieth-century abolitionists--as he is wont to call the sociologists who are critical of the South's racial system. The "Sociologist Militant", says Davidson, is "simply a reincarnation of the old-time Abolitionist." With a phrase, Davidson harnesses incipient

⁵³⁹ Tate's use of the epithet "wandering Southern property" indicated an unwillingness to distinguish between slave property and other kinds of property. Ironically enough, Tate later attacked "Big Business interests today" for trying to obscure the distinctions between kinds of property. In 1936, Tate wrote that the "trap" of Big Business was "to convince the people that there is one kind of property--just property, whether it be a thirty-acre farm in Kentucky or a stock certificate in the United States Steel Corporation." Tate, "Notes on Liberty and Property," in Who Owns America? p. 82.

⁵⁴⁰ Tate, Stonewall Jackson, p. 55. Tate will brook no appeals to the "higher law" so far as slavery is concerned. But he is willing to issue a qualified call for revolution if legislation fails to place power in the hands of the people who live on the land. In 1934, Tate wrote: "There is a plain programme for the South, and . . . for all regions of western culture where the majority of the people are on the land and where there is enough common patriotism to grapple with the future of orderly civilization. Either by legislation or by revolution, in regions where the land supports most of the people, the power must pass to those people." See Tate, "A View of the Whole South," American Review, II (February, 1934), 430.

Southern hatred of the Abolitionists and attaches it to the social scientist who advocates change. Assuming the role of psychiatrist, himself, Davidson says of the sociologist who deplores the South's bi-racial structure: "He is in fact, I suspect, a baffled and somewhat lonely individual, capable of readily developing a martyr psychology. That alone makes him dangerous."⁵⁴¹ In his effort to discredit the present-day sociologist who invades a happy plantation area (an "Eden") and proposes to change the condition of the Negro tenants, Davidson, in effect, calls that sociologist a devil--a purveyor of the "new form of abolitionism."⁵⁴² Of course, Davidson is polite--he says the sociologist is "the wise serpent, the Light-Bringer."⁵⁴³ Would Davidson think it impolite if, exploiting a supposed historical parallel ourselves, we mentioned that Thomas R. Dew (the pro-slavery writer), when he sought a phrase to damn an anti-slavery man, hit upon a version of the very Biblical metaphor which Davidson has used in these latter days? According to Dew, the slave is happy in his position of subordination; then (says Dew) comes the "wily philanthropist" to "light up the dungeon

⁵⁴¹ Davidson, "Where Are the Laymen? A Study in Policy-Making," American Review, IX (October, 1937), 474.

⁵⁴² Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 179, 200. See also footnote 105 on p. 142 of this dissertation. For another example of Davidson's practice of disparaging some sociologists as inheritors of the abolitionist tradition, see his "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 394.

⁵⁴³ Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 179.

in which he persuades the slave that he is caged--and that moment, like the serpent that entered the garden of Eden, he destroys his happiness and usefulness."⁵⁴⁴ We need not be serious when we make our comparison between the literary ornaments in which Davidson and Dew deck sociologist and philanthropist.⁵⁴⁵ But it is hard to resist the temptation which the behavior of Davidson (or is it Satan?) presents.

A third weapon in some of the Vanderbilt writers' private war⁵⁴⁶ on the Abolitionists and the anti-segregationists is the argument that the Abolitionists were almost wholly responsible for the decreasing elasticity in the Southerners' attitude toward slavery during the nineteenth century. By emphasizing that the anti-slavery propaganda seemed to incite the Negroes to mass murder, Owsley makes it appear that Northern critics of slavery--and not the Southern defenders of slavery--are to be

⁵⁴⁴ [Thomas R.] Dew, "Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32," in The Pro-Slavery Argument, p. 460.

⁵⁴⁵ Davidson's metaphor is probably not derived from Dew's. If any specific source (other than Biblical tradition) exists, it may be Ransom's God without Thunder--which interprets the story of the Fall so as to represent Satan as a sort of scientist. "Lucifer," says Ransom, "is Light-bearer; in more prosy language, the Scientific Enlightenment. In this capacity he is a spirit analogous to Prometheus, who is Forethought." Ransom, God without Thunder, pp. 129-130.

⁵⁴⁶ The figure of speech is derived from the title of C. Vann Woodward's article, "John Brown's Private War," in America in Crisis: Fourteen Crucial Episodes in American History, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York, 1952), 109.

blamed for the increasing restrictions on the Negroes. Owsley's justification of the South's behavior in the face of the Abolitionist attack is a sweeping extension of Walter L. Fleming's assertion that the "rise of abolition sentiment and agitation in the North had much to do with stopping in the South the discussion of emancipation schemes."⁵⁴⁷ Owsley gives the Abolitionists and their industrialist sponsors the full blame for the "restrictive regulation and closer surveillance of the Negro"⁵⁴⁸ which characterized the last few decades before the Civil War (as contrasted with the period before 1820).⁵⁴⁹ Crediting the Abolitionists with a tremendous power over the wills of the Southerners, Owsley declares that because of the Abolitionist crusade "the South was forced to spend its energies defending an institution which, before the crusade began, it

⁵⁴⁷ Walter L. Fleming, "The Slave-Labor System in the Antebellum South," in The South in the Building of the Nation, V (Richmond, 1909), 110. Fleming's statement is moderate as compared with some of Owsley's statements.

⁵⁴⁸ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 264.

⁵⁴⁹ An analogy suggests itself: Is the New Abolitionism of the Vanderbilt Agrarians themselves--the abolitionism which aims to have "property restored and the proletariat thus abolished and Communism made impossible"--partly to blame for any tightening of the strangle hold which industrialists today allegedly have upon the American population? The ridiculousness of the question suggests that it may also be farfetched for Owsley to give the old Abolitionism so much of the blame for the South's rigidity on the slavery question. The phrase describing the Agrarians' desire to abolish the proletariat is from Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," American Review, IV (March, 1935), 532.

had thought to abolish.⁵⁵⁰ Owsley seems to take seriously the idea that Abolitionism constituted a bloody and widespread threat to the internal social order of the Old South.⁵⁵¹ Evidently, Owsley finds quite justifiable any efforts that were made to keep out of circulation in the South all literature criticizing slavery. Like some ante-bellum defenders of slavery, Owsley does not bother to inquire whether all the literature critical of slavery actually incited to violence. He simply gives an unqualified defense of the suppression of anti-slavery literature--on grounds that the Old Southerners feared servile revolt.⁵⁵² (He is sure that the suppression was not prompted

⁵⁵⁰ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 264. Owsley says that up until about 1800 "most of the Southern people" were abolitionists (upon condition that the freed Negroes be colonized outside the South). See Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 77-78. Compare Owsley's picture of the South's willingness to abolish slavery with William Sumner Jenkins' statement in reference to approximately the same period: "In the South, the weight of public opinion had always been in support of slavery." Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought, p. 48.

⁵⁵¹ Warren tends to minimize the likelihood that activities such as John Brown's could really present a serious threat to the institution of slavery. See Warren, John Brown, pp. 331-332. Owsley, in contrast, does not pass up the opportunity to say of even a modern student of the Abolitionist movement, Professor Dwight L. Dumond: "By implication he [Dumond] apparently accepts the abolitionist doctrine--so forcibly demonstrated by John Brown--that only the shedding of blood could bring remission of sins." See Owsley [Review of Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857, ed. Dwight L. Dumond], Journal of Southern History, V (May, 1939), 264.

⁵⁵² See Owsley, "Origins of the American Civil War," Southern Review, V (Spring, 1940), 617-618. Owsley's unqualified defense of such suppression would imply, if Owsley is logical, that all literature critical of the industrial wage system be suppressed now lest it lead the laborers to bloody revolt.

by any fear that nonslaveholders would be converted to abolitionism). Justifying the bans on writings which disparaged slavery, Owsley asks whether Dwight L. Dumond's identification of this suppression with the suppression of basic American freedoms does not confuse "license with liberty."⁵⁵³

Both Davidson and Owsley emphasize that outside criticism of, and interference with, the bi-racial arrangements of the South today is a declaration of war on social order in the South--and will necessarily lead some Southern whites to take up arms against Negroes. The "Sociologist Militant,"⁵⁵⁴ who, Owsley would probably say, is one of the "intellectual . . . grandchildren of the Abolitionists,"⁵⁵⁵ "can become a catalytic agent of tremendous power" in provoking violence, Davidson warns. Then he elaborates his analogy whereby new Sociologist becomes old Abolitionist writ large:

In our times the Sociologist Militant is the catalytic agent who helps precipitate action, of the North against the South, in such matters as share-croppers' unions, Federal anti-lynching laws, agitation for race equality, and other campaigns and programs that are socially disruptive along sectional or class lines. The Sociologist Militant will probably be unable to precipitate another war of section against section but he could bring about civil strife--let

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p. 618. For examples of Tate's anger at the Abolitionists for "sending more and more pamphlets to the negroes, see Tate, Stonewall Jackson, pp. 25, 54. For a hint to the effect that Davidson considers the Abolitionists' efforts were an attack on "the very foundations of Southern culture," see Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan, p. 237.

⁵⁵⁴ Davidson, "Where Are the Laymen? A Study in Policy-Making," American Review, IX (October, 1937), 474.

⁵⁵⁵ Owsley applies this figure of speech to crusaders for the Southern Negroes in our time. See Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 259.

us say, of the type that preceded the present Spanish war or that threatened France during the formation and early activities of the Popular Front.⁵⁵⁶

Owsley, following the same line as Davidson, says that when outsiders interfere with, or comment vociferously on, the administration of justice in Southern courts the criminal Negro "is bound to feel that he himself is above the reach of the law in a Southern State." Grimly citing instances in which the Communists--or Northerners of other stripe--have contributed to the defense of Southern Negroes or helped Negroes to appeal convictions by all-white juries,⁵⁵⁷ Owsley makes this statement:

It is hardly to be supposed that the Southern whites will tolerate such a situation. One has only to read the history of the abolition crusade or more particularly the history of reconstruction to be able to predict what will follow such flagrant interference either by the capitalist industrialists or by Communists. An extra-legal government would quickly spring into existence and such cases as that of the "Scottsboro boys" would be tried in courts whose decrees could not be appealed to a Federal tribunal. In other words, the outside interference with the relationship of the whites and blacks in the South can result in nothing but organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and in violent retaliation against the Negroes--themselves often innocent.⁵⁵⁸

In these words, Owsley seems almost to excuse white Southerners

⁵⁵⁶ Davidson, "Where Are the Laymen? A Study in Policy-Making," American Review, IX (October, 1937), 474.

⁵⁵⁷ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 272, 285.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 285. For a discussion of Lytle's views on lynching and outside criticism of the South's racial system, see pp. 131-134 of this dissertation.

for any bloodthirstiness which they might show in the course of defending their right to administer justice through all-white juries.

The end result of Owsley's campaign against the Abolitionists is that, instead of busying himself with showing how the Old Southerners could have responded constructively to the challenge of criticism, he contents himself, first, with self-righteous assertions that the South would probably have ended slavery "long before the close of the nineteenth century" if she had been left alone⁵⁵⁹ and, second, with explanations of why the South could not have been expected to begin a plan of gradual emancipation during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶⁰ When he emphasizes the probability that the "South would have freed its slaves in due time had it been permitted to work out its problems," he relies heavily on the argument that "by soil exhaustion" the "economic foundations" of slavery were "rapidly crumbling before 1860."⁵⁶¹ It is amusing to note that when Owsley refers to iron economic law (the fact of diminishing profits) as being sufficient to bring

⁵⁵⁹ Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction," American Review, I (June, 1933), 264. See also Owsley, "Abolition and Secession," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (July, 1935), 463.

⁵⁶⁰ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 78

⁵⁶¹ Owsley, [Review of Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857, ed. Dwight L. Dumond], Journal of Southern History V (May, 1939), 263-264.

the end of slavery, he ignores his own forceful presentation of the Old South's social (i.e., racial) reasons for keeping the Negro in bondage.⁵⁶² In general, his major purpose seems to be single-minded defense of the South for taking the course it did on slavery up until 1860.

A first element in Owsley's rationalization is his contention that the South was not, after all, responsible for the introduction of slavery. "Slavery had been practically forced upon the country by England--over the protest of colonial assemblies," Owsley maintains.⁵⁶³ Tate adopts a similar

⁵⁶² Compare ibid. with Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 78, 82-83. Was the South's resistance, on social and racial grounds, to freeing the Negro to be overcome merely by the profit motive? we may ask Owsley. We may complain that Owsley should make the white Old Southerners' social objections to emancipation look less pressing and plausible if he expects us to believe that mere economic forces could have freed the slaves. May we not suspect Owsley of tacitly assuming that these economic pressures would have simply prompted white Southerners to devise new ways of maintaining social control over the Negro--that is, to replace slavery with some even less expensive mode of keeping the Negro in a subordinate and exploitable position? Does Owsley assume that--as Charles W. Ramsdell puts it--"new codes for the control of free negroes might easily, in the course of time, have removed the greatest objection on the part of non-slaveholders to emancipation"? See Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (September, 1929), 171. Owsley cites Ramsdell's article on the economic facts which would help to make slavery wither away. But Owsley does not mention Ramsdell's explanation of how the social objections to emancipation were to be overcome. See Owsley, "Slavery and the Struggle of the Sections," Yale Review, XXIV (Spring, 1935), 644.

⁵⁶³ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 77. Compare Owsley's statement with William Sumner Jenkins' contention that colonial efforts, at certain times, to "abolish or limit the importation of slaves" were "not directed at the overthrow of domestic slavery but rather aimed at the protection of the institution against alien influences." Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought, pp. 29-30, 48.

strategy of shifting the responsibility for slavery when he gives his sarcastic version of the origins of slavery: "The opulence and the expansive ease of the planter, his summers at Pass Christian or the Greenbrier White Sulphur, his winters at New Orleans and Charleston, his magnificent hospitality, had all been made possible," Tate says, "by the honest labor of a swarm of English, Spanish, Portuguese and New England slave-traders, who for a century and a half had landed cargoes of Negroes in New Orleans, or on the coasts of Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas."⁵⁶⁴ Tate maintains that the "ultimate responsibility for slavery . . . rests upon the native operators, who drove their fellow Negroes in herds to the coast where they went to the highest white bidder."⁵⁶⁵ Thus, by pointing out that England, New England, and Africa--not individuals in the Southern states--were to blame for the introduction of slavery,

⁵⁶⁴ Tate, Jefferson Davis, pp. 38-39. See also p. 39 of Tate's Stonewall Jackson. New England's failure to remember her own profits from the slave trade is perhaps alluded to in Tate's poem "Fragment of a Meditation," when he speaks of how the "Black Republicans/Took a short memory to their hot desire." See Tate, "Fragment of a Meditation," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 86. Cf. Warren, John Brown, pp. 226-227.

⁵⁶⁵ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 39. In his novel Band of Angels Robert Penn Warren includes a blood-curdling narrative of native Africans enslaving members of their own race. Warren escapes from the stereotype of the New England slave trader in that a slave trader of Southern origin figures in Band of Angels. Warren, Band of Angels, pp. 176-198.

Owsley and Tate revive the "entailment" argument.⁵⁶⁶ This argument--that the "South was not responsible for the introduction of slavery" and that it "was an inherited problem"--was one of the "favorite apologies" used by early pro-slavery thinkers, according to William Sumner Jenkins,⁵⁶⁷ who has made a survey of pro-slavery thought.

Tate and Owsley seem to believe that, at least until 1860, the "social" argument for the continuance of slavery made good sense. In Jefferson Davis, Tate appears to sympathize with the planters who, in answer to an economic argument against slavery, asked "What would become of the Negroes?" and "Who would control and care for them?" It appears that Tate is expressing his own (as well as the planters') opinion when he says the "problem was insoluble."⁵⁶⁸ Owsley apparently thinks the Old Southerners were justified in their unwillingness to free the slaves unless the freedmen were colonized outside the South. On one occasion he explains that the Southerners themselves found, early in the nineteenth century, that "colonization was futile." "It was soon realized by all practical

⁵⁶⁶ The "entailment" argument affords a convenient way for Tate and Owsley to avert their eyes from a fact that is obvious to any liberal--namely, the fact that the slavery system revealed the Southerners' willingness to take from nature more than what man needs and to exploit nature more rapidly and on a larger scale than the individual family could. Cf. Tate's claims that the Old South did not desire to take from nature more than man needs: Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 301.

⁵⁶⁷ Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought, p. 104

⁵⁶⁸ Tate, Jefferson Davis, p. 47

slaveholders that the negroes could not be deported successfully" because deportation was "cruel and expensive": with these words Owsley clears the conscience of the cotton planters. Prior to the opening of the cotton lands in the Southwest (Owsley says) the planters "had considered emancipation honestly and fairly and had found it out of the question. Their skirts were clear. Let the blood of slavery rest upon the heads of those who had forced it upon the South."⁵⁶⁹ On another occasion, Owsley takes a different line: he raises a question which will suggest that perhaps it was the Abolitionists who made the colonization experiments "futile."⁵⁷⁰ Owsley's two contrasting implications about why so little was accomplished toward emancipation and colonization do have a common denominator: that common denominator is Owsley's insistence upon excusing or even defending the course which the white South followed up until 1860.

The colonization experiment which led to the founding of Liberia figured recently in Tate's literary criticism when he wrote a preface to an American Negro poet's ode commemorating

⁵⁶⁹ Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," in I'll Take My Stand, p. 78.

⁵⁷⁰ Dwight L. Dumond is criticized by Owsley for accepting James G. Birney's opinion that the "American Colonization Society was a futility without considering the possibility that it might have been the abolitionist attack that made it so." Owsley [Review of Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857, ed. Dwight L. Dumond], Journal of Southern History, V (May, 1939), 263-264.

the centenary of the Republic of Liberia.⁵⁷¹ Tate's praise of the ode--Libretto for the Republic of Libaria, by Melvin B. Tolson--is, on the surface, praise not for its subject but for its language.⁵⁷² Yet it is easy to suspect that in certain ways the subject itself--Americans' (and, more particularly, Old Southerners') exporting of the liberated products of slavery--

⁵⁷¹ Allen Tate, "Preface" to Libretto for the Republic of Liberia, by Melvin B. Tolson (New York, 1953). A version of Tate's "Preface" was published in Poetry, LXXVI (July, 1950), 216-218. Subsequent references in this dissertation are to the version published in 1953.

⁵⁷² Tate, "Preface" to Libretto for the Republic of Liberia, by Tolson [n. 2]. Speaking of Tolson, Tate says that for the first time "a Negro poet [in the United States] has assimilated completely the full poetic language of his time and, by implication, the language of the Anglo-American poetic tradition." (Ibid.) Tate's partiality for Tolson's poetic language may be in some measure due to the fact that Tolson shows no partiality for Northerners and Abolitionists in such a phrase as the one alluding to the time when "the bells of Yankee capital/Tolled for the feudal glory of the South/And Frederick Douglass's Vesuvian mouth/Erupted amens crushing Copperheads." Tolson, Libretto for the Republic of Liberia, 11s. 101-104 of the section entitled "MI."

appeals to Tate.⁵⁷³ The colonization experiment was supported by persons with various motives, but its very essence was the aim of removing Negroes (particularly free Negroes) from

⁵⁷³ Tate works out a complicated rationalization of his feeling that Tolson's work (celebrating Liberia's centenary) does not suffer from disadvantages which (says Tate) have plagued previous work by American Negro poets. Speaking of Negro poets who have not "assimilated completely . . . the language of the Anglo-American poetic tradition" as Tolson has, Tate says that there has perhaps been a "resistance" to such assimilation "on the part of those Negroes who supposed that their peculiar genius lay in 'folk' idiom or in the romantic creation of a 'new' language within the English language." Tate concedes that "interesting" and "even distinguished" work has been done "in these directions"--"notably by Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks. But," Tate continues, "there are two disadvantages to this approach: first, the 'folk' and 'new' languages are not very different from those that White poets can write; secondly, the distinguishing Negro quality is not in the language but in the subject-matter, which is usually the plight of the Negro segregated in a White culture. The plight is real and often tragic; but I cannot think that, from the literary point of view, the tragic aggressiveness of the modern poet offers wider poetic possibilities than the resigned pathos of Paul Laurence Dunbar, who was only a 'White' poete manque. Both attitudes have limited the Negro poet to a provincial mediocrity in which one's feelings about one's difficulties become more important than poetry itself." (See Tate, "Preface" to Libretto for the Republic of Liberia, by Tolson [pp. 2-3].) Tate's willingness here to admit that the Negro's plight in American culture is "often tragic" suggests that Tate has become more sensitive than he was in the days of his Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis to the moral wrong which the South has perpetrated in importing African labor and keeping it in a debased condition. (See pp. 216-221 of this dissertation; and compare Tate's recent admission of the Negro's frequently "tragic" plight with the attitudes toward the Negro expressed by Davidson and Lytle and cited on pp. 131-134, 142n, and 464-466 of this dissertation.) At the same time, it is hard, from the literary point of view, to see why Tate can feel the plight of the Negro segregated in a white culture offers narrower poetic possibilities than does the plight which Tate treats in his own "Ode to the Confederate Dead." (Tate, "Ode to the Confederate Dead," Poems: 1922-1947, pp. 19-23.) It is hard, too, to prevent a suspicion that an unexpressed assumption of Tate's is the notion that Liberia as a subject-matter offers "wider poetic possibilities" than does the Negro's plight in the United States. See Tate, "Preface" to Libretto for the Republic of Liberia, by Tolson [pp. 2-3].

American culture.⁵⁷⁴ The feelings that supported such an aim are not necessarily in conflict with the feelings which have prompted Tate to deplore the presence of the Negro in the Old South--although it can scarcely be imagined that contributors to the American Colonization Society would have expressed in aesthetic terms such as Tate's⁵⁷⁵ their uneasiness about the Negro's presence in a culture predominantly of white European origin.

Although, as we have just seen, a poem celebrating the African republic which grew out of the colonization of around 1,500 American Negro ex-slaves recently attracted Tate's attention, Tate does not in his own fiction or poetry deal with any Old Southern proposals for facilitating emancipation of slaves prior to 1860. (We have noted that even in what may be an interpretation of the debates on slavery in the Virginia legislature in 1831-32, Tate fails to discuss Virginia's loss of its chance to initiate constructive change in the relation between the races.)⁵⁷⁶ That there should have been state action to abolish slavery is not, evidently, a possibility that much

⁵⁷⁴ The motives which prompted some Southerners to support colonization efforts such as those undertaken by the American Colonization Society are briefly analyzed in Sydnor, Development of Southern Sectionalism: 1819-1848, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁷⁵ Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South, On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 273-274. This passage is cited on pp. 295-299 of this dissertation.

⁵⁷⁶ See pp. 117-125 of this dissertation for an analysis of Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in I'll Take My Stand, pp. 173-174.

attracts Tate. Nor does he give evidence that he greatly deplores the Old South's having laws and customs which made even private manumissions difficult.⁵⁷⁷ He does treat several examples of manumission in his fiction and poetry. In these examples Tate investigates some possible moral dimensions of single acts of manumission. One of these examples (in Sonnet IV of his sequence "Sonnets of the Blood") briefly pictures an individualistic Virginian who "took himself to be brute nature's law," who "[c]ared little what men thought him," and who

. . . meditated calmly what he saw
Until he freed his Negroes, lest he be
Too strict with nature and than they less free.

The "tall man"⁵⁷⁸ who emancipates his slaves in this poem resembles, in some respects, John Randolph of Roanoke.⁵⁷⁹ A second example of an act of manumission occurs in Tate's short story

⁵⁷⁷ We may wonder what the reaction of Owsley or Tate would be to the following comment, by Frank Tannenbaum, on the rigidity of the Southern system: the virtual "denial of manumission encrusted the social structure in the Southern states and left no escape except by revolution, which in this case took the form of a civil war," Tannenbaum says; "It is, therefore, not entirely an accident that the abolition of slavery in the United States was achieved within the painful experience of a civil war, and followed by an almost equally painful and disintegrating process of a period of reconstruction." See Frank Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen (New York, 1947), p. 110.

⁵⁷⁸ Tate, "Sonnets of the Blood [No. IV]," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 168.

⁵⁷⁹ Russell Kirk, Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in Conservative Thought (Chicago, 1951), p. 130; William P. Trent, Southern Statesmen of the Old Regime: Washington, Jefferson, Randolph, Calhoun, Stephens, Toombs, and Jefferson Davis (New York, 1897), pp. 108, 132, 139.

"The Migration," which has been discussed earlier in this dissertation.⁵⁸⁰ Other examples of manumission are alluded to in Tate's novel The Fathers. In The Fathers Tate chooses for one of his manumitters a fire-eating Southern Rights politician (John Semmes)--a Virginian--who frees his slaves (so he says) in order to avoid raising more to sell into the Deep South.⁵⁸¹ The other manumitter (or would-be manumitter) is a Southern Unionist (Lewis Buchan)--also a Virginian. Contrasted with both these gentlemen who are willing to free all, or some, of their slaves is a young man with business principles, George Posey (Buchan's son-in-law). Posey--who, as we have seen earlier, is clearly intended by Tate to represent the new "untraditional" business society which will flourish unchecked after the Civil War--sells the slaves whose manumission papers Buchan has asked him to execute.⁵⁸² Tate's narrator (Buchan's youngest son) comments as follows on George Posey's view of Buchan:

To him papa's refusal to buy or sell a negro was only a kind of fastidious self-indulgence at the expense of his posterity, who would have to sell the negroes sooner or later, or manumit them at the cost of actually giving money away. I suppose George, in what was considered [by John Semmes] his high-handed fashion, took the first step against this family bankruptcy when he sold Jack Lewis and his family into Georgia: to have freed them, in deference to papa's wish, would have been, to George, to permit papa to rob his children in order to do what he considered humanly right. Papa could not use the

⁵⁸⁰ See pp. 325-327 of this dissertation for a discussion of Tate, "The Migration," Yale Review, XXIV (Autumn, 1934), 111.

⁵⁸¹ Tate, The Fathers, pp. 82, 134.

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 131-134.

negroes; therefore they must be freed. But was not George Posey right about this? And was not papa also, in his own fine way, right?⁵⁸³

By means of his narrator, Tate has emphasized some of the sacrifice to which an individual planter might subject himself or his family when he manumitted a slave.⁵⁸⁴

We turn now from Owsley's and Tate's failure to imagine that the Old South could possibly have answered the Abolitionists by sponsoring--before 1860--a home-grown plan looking toward the abolition of slavery. Having picked up from Owsley and Davidson the habit of thinking in historical analogies, we may be struck by the feeling that both the Old Southerners' pre-Civil War rigidity in regard to slavery and Owsley's apparent belief that their rigidity was justified are paralleled by Davidson's rigidity on the question of segregation. Rather than encouraging state and community to sponsor evolution away from segregation, Davidson tends to emphasize that the status quo embodies the best of all possible racial patterns for the present. Davidson can tolerate no challenge to the existing bi-racial order.

Davidson sets out to discredit liberals who wish to reduce or eliminate race prejudice in the economic and political field and in a "limited number of social relations." You can't eliminate prejudice in these matters without going on "to complete equality and, finally, to racial amalgamation," Davidson insists.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p. 134.

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Warren, Band of Angels, p. 33.

To Davidson, apparently, either "complete equality" or "racial amalgamation" would be for the South a fate worse than death. Davidson is sure that the liberals are not very strong in the South, and he very subtly implies that they are important simply as an aid to the Communist program.⁵⁸⁵ Smugly Davidson declares: "Probably the liberal compromise is only a superficial phenomenon, which will shatter if put to a severe test. It has importance only as it blends into and prepares the way for the thorough-going Communist policy of full equality and

⁵⁸⁵ Donald Davidson, "Gulliver with Hay Fever," American Review, IX (Summer, 1937), 168.

Like Davidson, Owsley seems to have made use of the Communist label to discredit liberal activities of which he disapproved. Owsley even applied the label "fellow traveler" to one of the original Vanderbilt Agrarians whose reported activities in the late 1930's displeased him. When Owsley referred, in 1939, to one of the Vanderbilt Agrarians who was "reported to be a fellow traveler with the communists," he may have been expressing his disapproval of Herman Clarence Nixon's participation in an interracial meeting of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare in Birmingham, Alabama, in November, 1938. See Frank L. Owsley, "Mr. Daniels Discovers the South," Southern Review, IV (Spring, 1939), 671. The controversial meeting of the Southern Conference on Human Welfare was, according to Nixon himself, attended by "half a dozen known members of the Communist Party," but Nixon did not for that reason discredit the respectable people at the meeting or the good things for which it stood. See Nixon, Lower Piedmont Country, pp. 171-175.

no compromise."⁵⁸⁶ In another article (published in 1945) Davidson calls for a Southern leadership to "represent majority opinion in the South as a whole." The "main concern" of such a group, Davidson thinks, would be with "the bi-racial system,

⁵⁸⁶ Davidson, "Gulliver with Hay Fever," American Review, IX (Summer, 1937), 168. See also Davidson, "A Sociologist in Eden," American Review, VIII (December, 1936), 199; and Davidson, "Some Day in Old Charleston," Georgia Review, III (Summer, 1949), 161. We may well wonder what Davidson's own policy of no compromise "blends into." Perhaps his social policy "blends into" that of the State Rights Democrats (better known as Dixiecrats). Speaking to a conference of Southern writers in 1950 in Mississippi, Davidson implied that in Mississippi's casting its electoral vote for the State Rights Democratic candidates in 1948, Southern writers might see an example of the direction in which their own "public duty," as Southern writers and Southern citizens, lay. See Donald Davidson, "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature," in Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities, ed. Richmond C. Beatty, et al., I (Nashville, 1951), p. 17.

If Davidson's policy of no compromise on the issue of segregation "blends into" the policy of the violently pro-segregation State Rights Democrats, the question arises as to what the full purposes of the State Rights Democrats were. That the State Rights Democrats followed a policy which in certain respects blended into the policies desired by oil and other business interests is a point which Davidson does not mention. Davidson would probably have difficulty admitting that the mentality which runs the cotton plantation may be quite compatible with the mentality that seeks riches from oil and other businesses. V. O. Key, Jr., sheds light on the possible unity of plantation exploiter and oil exploiter when he notes that Ben Laney (who was prominent in the State Rights Democratic movement of 1948) ran for governor of Arkansas (in 1944) on his "record as a businessman." Key points out that oil had been discovered on Laney's "family holdings" and that Laney received an "overwhelming vote" from the delta plantation counties in Arkansas. See V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), p. 198. Our digression on the State Rights Democrats, whom Davidson has praised, may serve as a liberal's revenge for Davidson's suggestion that Southern liberalism on matters of race "blends into and prepares the way" for Communist policies. Davidson, "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature," in Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities, ed. Beatty, I, 17; Davidson, "Gulliver with Hay Fever," American Review, IX (Summer, 1937), 168.

as that system now stands, in the context both of history and of current events, for that system undoubtedly marks the approximate limits of the concessions that the South is willing to make on the Negro problem."⁵⁸⁷ Davidson takes a roseate view of the bi-racial system and the laws fortifying it; it is only when the system is challenged that there is friction between the races, he declares:

The regime is mild on the whole, and even indulgent on occasion, but it becomes harsh to the point of violence when the Negro or any of his advocates challenges the bi-racial modus vivendi. But though violence or extreme lack of personal consideration may be manifested when the system is challenged, it is really intended to prevent conflict by diminishing the provocation to conflict.⁵⁸⁸

What is the attitude of Tate and of Ransom toward outside interference with segregation in the South? Do they, like Davidson and Owsley, see an Abolitionist behind every bush today? Or do they encourage the South to meet the twentieth-century "infiltrators" of ideas by presenting locally-originated proposals for modification of the South's racial structure? Recently, Ransom expressed himself in the following terms:

I do not like to see the Federal government trying to enforce civil rights in the South, especially in view of the rapid improvement already going on; this is what I say to my Northern friends. To my Southern friends I must say: Go just as fast as you can towards giving the Negro his full complement of rights after his centuries of slavery and low caste.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 411.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 406.

⁵⁸⁹ Ransom, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 15-16.

Ransom's tone is quite different from that of Davidson--who is still reminding Southerners (lest they forget and begin to treat the Negro as an equal?) that "[u]nequal status was the condition of [the Negro's] entry" into this country and that slavery has left a "stigma" on the Negro because the system "afforded a means of control over an element of population that otherwise would have been deemed undesirable."⁵⁹⁰ Unfortunately Tate--while he does not himself speak in accents so truculent as Davidson does--groups Davidson with the "moderates" on the race question.⁵⁹¹ Davidson's militant article, "Preface to Decision," was published in the Sewanee Review during Tate's editorship of that magazine.⁵⁹² When a number of letters were received from readers of Davidson's article, Tate felt moved to comment on Davidson's position. In his editorial comment on "Preface to Decision," Tate says that he disagrees with some of Davidson's points--for example, Davidson's "belief that segregation was instituted mainly for the protection of the Negro" and Davidson's view that "we may nullify at will the fourteenth

⁵⁹⁰ Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 404.

⁵⁹¹ Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 659-660.

⁵⁹² Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 394-412.

and fifteenth amendments to the Federal Constitution."⁵⁹³ But Tate declares himself in agreement with what he says is Davidson's "central argument." Davidson's "principle," Tate says, is "simply that there is a point beyond which legislation cannot, without risk of violence, go against custom."⁵⁹⁴ This is a conveniently vague formulation of Davidson's "principle." The question is: Where is the point beyond which legislation cannot without risk of violence go? Tate overlooks the possibility that such determined adherence as Davidson's to the bi-racial pattern, as it at present exists, may itself provoke revolutionary resentments among the Negroes. Tate says that he himself deplores extreme positions on the race question--whether the "sentimental nihilism" of the "radical Negro leaders" or the "intransigence of the white stand-patters."

⁵⁹³ Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 660. Davidson declares: the "Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were planted in the Constitution by fraud and force. I can see no reason why any Southerner should respect them today, nor can I see why any white American, or any American Negro, can take pride in them or derive comfort from them." See Davidson, "Preface to Decision," Sewanee Review, LIII (Summer, 1945), 405-406. Frank L. Owsley, like Davidson, feels that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments need not be respected. Says Owsley: "no self-respecting, well-informed American can look with reverence upon this portion of the Federal document." See Owsley, "The Foundations of Democracy," in Who Owns America? p. 55. Davidson's respect for the fraud and force of the post-Civil War Ku Klux Klan contrasts interestingly with his lack of respect for the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. See Davidson, The Tennessee, II, 131.

⁵⁹⁴ Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 660. Cf. the argument of the pro-slavery apologist Thomas R. Dew: "The deep and solid foundations of society can not be broken up by the vain fiat of the legislator." Dew, "Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-32," in The Pro-Slavery Argument, p. 490.

The "white stand-patters" are, says Tate, those who think that the Negro is "scarcely human" and that his position in relation to the social structure need not change "if the Yankees would let [the South] . . . alone."⁵⁹⁵ Why Tate groups Davidson with the "moderates" rather than with the "white stand-patters" is an unfathomable mystery. One key--"bloody and perilous," perhaps, "like Bluebeard's"⁵⁹⁶--to this mystery may be Tate's studied remark that the stand-patters are deluded if they think "society under a dynamic machine technology can remain static." Even though Tate may be realistic enough to see that the Negro's relation to the social structure is obviously changing and that the "Yankees are not going to let [the South] . . . alone,"⁵⁹⁷ it may be that Tate feels fundamentally at one with Davidson because they both long for a society, minus dynamic machine technology, which could remain static.

Yet in spite of Tate's general approval of Davidson's "principle" in reference to the South's bi-racial system, there is perhaps a real difference between the two men. The difference may best be stated, not in terms of a distinction in the prescriptions or programs which the two have offered for the race problem, but in terms of Davidson's apparent lack of

⁵⁹⁵ Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 659-660.

⁵⁹⁶ This is a metaphor used by Tate in his discussion of the "key to unlock the Southern mind." See Tate, "The Profession of Letters in the South," On the Limits of Poetry, p. 269.

⁵⁹⁷ Tate, "Mr. Davidson and the Race Problem," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 659.

imagination. Davidson is capable of writing poetry which is a sophisticated appeal for the continuance of segregation:

Black man, when you and I were young together
 We knew each other's hearts. Though I am no longer
 A child, and you perhaps unfortunately
 Are no longer a child, we still understand
 Better maybe than others. There is a wall
 Between us, anciently erected. Once
 It might have been crossed, men say. But now I cannot
 Forget that I was master, and you can hardly
 Forget that you were slave. We did not build
 The ancient wall, but there it painfully is.
 Let us not bruise our foreheads on the wall.⁵⁹⁸

In contrast to Davidson (who is content to put in poetry a complacent justification of the ways of white man to black), Tate has recently shown that he can write poetry hinting at the guilt of the whole community in an act of violence against a Negro. In "The Swimmers," a section of a long poem still in progress, Tate writes of the lynching of a Negro in such a way as to suggest, in the end, that an entire town is responsible. (Presumably he uses the term "all the town" loosely--to designate, primarily, the white citizenry.) Of the Negro's corpse, when it has been brought from the woods to the courthouse

⁵⁹⁸ Davidson, The Tall Men, pp. 39-40. Davidson's complacency here about the white man's treatment of the Negro in the South is underscored by the fact that in the same poem he points out the exploitation involved in modern white imperialism. The "modern brain," says Davidson, is "attended" by (among other things) "the thousand/Backs and hands of brown and yellow men/ In Singapore or Ceylon." See Davidson, "The Tall Men," Lee in the Mountains, p. 83. The liberal will welcome Davidson's attempt to make him aware of the sin of imperialism, but he will deplore Davidson's attempts to gloss over the evils in the caste system which the South has perpetuated within its own borders.

square, Tate says:

. . . Alone in the public clearing
This private thing was owned by all the town,
Though never claimed by us within my hearing.⁵⁹⁹

Suggesting the complicity of the community in the crime, Tate does not try to shift the blame onto the Yankees. We can only wish that Tate had consistently shown in his social and historical writings the humanity of feeling which seems to inform at least the conclusion of this poem.⁶⁰⁰

Even those who would admit the soundness of some of the Vanderbilt Traditionalists' criticism of the Abolitionists

⁵⁹⁹ Allen Tate, "The Swimmers," Hudson Review, V (Winter, 1953), 473. Not only does "The Swimmers" reveal a social imagination far more sensitive than Davidson's, but also it reveals an increase in Tate's own sensitivity since the mid-thirties. In the second of his "Sonnets at Christmas" (published in 1934) Tate's guilt feelings about the Negro are limited to an item of personal morality: "When I was ten," says Tate, "I told a stinking lie/That got a black boy whipped." In this poem Tate's interest seems to be less in his "crime" than in the fact that he is "[p]unished by crimes of which [he] . . . would be quit." Yet even this poem suggests that Tate's conscience was, as far back as the mid-thirties, tenderer than Davidson's. See Tate, "Sonnets at Christmas (No. II)," Poems: 1922-1947, p. 51. Other poems by Tate containing brief allusions to Negroes include the following: "Message from Abroad," ibid., p. 11; "More Sonnets at Christmas (No. II)," ibid., p. 53; and "Idiot," ibid., p. 157.

⁶⁰⁰ The earlier part of the poem includes an obscure mélange of theological language (alluding especially to the crucifixion of Christ) and folksy characterization of a sheriff. Ibid., pp. 471-473, especially ll. 37-39, 49-58. Compare Tate's sheriff (who briefly reveals himself in the phrase "'We come too late'") with Erskine Caldwell's dilatory Sheriff Jeff McCurtain. Ibid., pp. 472, 473, ll. 49-58, 67-70; Erskine Caldwell, Trouble in July, (New York, 1940).

may find it hard to accept the complacency with which Owsley and Davidson--and even Tate in some of his writings between 1928 and 1935--alternately ignore and justify the Old South's intransigence on the slavery question. Even harder for a Southern liberal to accept is the manner in which Owsley and Davidson exploit the historical Southern hatred of the Abolitionists to confirm some present-day Southerners in their unyielding defense of segregation. Instead of trying to help Southerners change the bi-racial system peaceably, Owsley and Davidson (if their statements are accepted) help to solidify the South in its resistance to change. As we have seen, Davidson and Owsley maintain that liberal and radical crusaders against segregation in the twentieth century reflect the unpleasant or even vicious traits of the Abolitionists. May we not suggest that Davidson and Owsley at times faintly resemble the Old Southern pro-slavery men, from Calhoun to Yancey, who refused to lead the South toward emancipation? And may we not also suggest that Tate, though he has made a beginning, has not yet atoned adequately for the violence of his attack on the Abolitionists, and the unconscionableness of his defense of slavery, in his biography of Stonewall Jackson?

VIII. CONCLUSION

Not entirely similar to each other are Tate's and Owsley's visions of the Promised Land toward which the Old South was moving when its destiny was cut short by the Civil War. Nor, for that matter, does Tate himself demonstrate notable consistency in the descriptions he gives of the direction of late ante-bellum political and socio-economic development. The confusion in Tate's thought (a confusion which appears in magnified form in Lytle's portrait of Bedford Forrest) is perhaps due to his inability to acknowledge that the slavery system was fundamentally (and not merely in some instances) an acquisitive system. His confusion is most apparent in his incongruous assumptions (1) that "Western" and Lower Southern acquisitiveness were subversive of the true Southern social order and (2) that Lower Southern planters like Calhoun and Rhett (whom the liberal would regard as relatively acquisitive) were the men with the convictions which the South should have followed wholeheartedly.

Although both Tate and Lytle at times picture the South as about to become settled, nonexpansive, and feudal by 1861, both show a willingness to admire Southern war leaders who had "Western" traits. Conflicts in Tate's feelings about "Eastern" and "Western" traits are mirrored in his novel The Fathers and in his portrait of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson.

Perhaps the most striking symptom of the blindness of Tate, Lytle, Davidson, and Owsley to the sin of the South in accepting, extending, and aiming to perpetuate slavery is the violence of these four Vanderbilt Traditionalists' hatred of the Abolitionists, the group who issued the most vigorous external challenge to the Old Southern social order. These Vanderbilt Traditionalists' extreme resentment of Abolitionist criticism of the Old South is a sinister sign suggesting that, whatever the lineaments of the Promised Land envisaged by these Vanderbilt writers, it would have been a land in which the liberal (who wants to live in a society permitting criticism of whatever evils it has) would have been very unhappy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Behind Allen Tate's myth of the Old South lies a myth of medieval and post-medieval Europe. Partly because Andrew Nelson Lytle shares Tate's peculiar attraction to European feudal social structure, Tate's image of the Old South resembles Lytle's more nearly than it resembles that of Frank Lawrence Owsley.

Tate's and Lytle's praise of the Old South, their criticisms of it, some of their errors, distortions, and inconsistencies in reporting its history and thought, and their speculations about what it might have become reveal, in general, their approval of a society of clearly defined classes. Such a society will persist, they apparently believe, when conditions are such as to permit the existence of a stable peasantry and a ruler (or ruling class) who encourages the stability of that peasantry. Despite Tate's and Lytle's evident belief that aristocracy is inferior to monarchy as a form of rule and despite their sharp criticism of some members of the Old Southern planter-aristocracy, they apparently regret that the Old Southern planter-aristocracy was overthrown by the Civil War instead of being allowed to consolidate its rule. In contrast to Tate, Owsley (who has recently been founding upon statistics a partly new image of the Old Southern social structure) implies that the planter-aristocrats were not the

rulers of the Old South "to the extent that has usually been claimed."¹ Owsley maintains that the Old South not only had a "sound economic basis for free government"² but believed in democratic ideology.³

In one respect, at least, in their early writings, five Vanderbilt Agrarians--Tate, Ransom, Owsley, Davidson, and Lytle--substantially agree about class and race in the Old South: all five provide rationalizations of the pre-Civil War South's determination to keep the Negro in his place. Some of Tate's references to Thomas Jefferson's egalitarianism as well as some of Tate's comments on John C. Calhoun's pro-slavery argument indicate that Tate dislikes chattel slavery less than he dislikes the twentieth-century labor system. The most appealing part of the Vanderbilt Agrarians' social thought--their desire to see productive property owned by a substantial portion of the people--is seriously compromised, in the view of a liberal, by Tate's and Lytle's praise of Calhoun's social thought and by Davidson's and Owsley's acrimonious attack on the Abolitionists, whom they liken to liberal and radical critics of race relations today.

What of the future of Tate and the other Vanderbilt Traditionalists whom we have been considering? Are there

¹ Frank L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South ([Baton Rouge], 1949), p. 138.

² Frank L. Owsley, "The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism," Journal of Southern History VII (February, 1941), 6.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

signs that they may outgrow, if they have not already outgrown, the undemocratic attitudes implied in some of their early writings on the Old South? John Crowe Ransom in a recent statement on the Negro in the South⁴ and, to a certain extent, Robert Penn Warren in his new novel Band of Angels have demonstrated a capacity to throw off the soft attitude toward Old Southern slavery which was frequently implicit (and at times explicit) in earlier Vanderbilt Agrarian writings. That Donald Davidson, Frank L. Owsley, or Andrew N. Lytle will develop any severely critical attitude toward Old Southern slavery or any real desire to see the Negro rid himself of the heritage of slavery does not, however, seem likely, if we judge on the basis of the bulk of their published writings.⁵ For Tate there is some hope. The indication in his recent poem "The Swimmers" that he can conceive of a whole Southern (white?) community

⁴ Ransom, "The Agrarians Today: Five Questions," Shenandoah, III (Summer, 1952), 15-16. This passage is quoted in part on p. 464 of this dissertation. See also p. 225n of this dissertation.

⁵ Recent statements (within the last ten years) by Davidson and Lytle are cited on pp. 134n, 347, and 463-464 of this dissertation. Note Davidson's extremely insulting reference to the report of the "President's committees on education, civil rights, and the like." See Davidson, "Some Day in Old Charleston," Georgia Review, III (Summer, 1949), 161. Owsley, ironically enough, has observed with apparent concern within the last ten years that Boston and other Northern cities are "not dealing kindly with the Negro." See Frank L. Owsley, "Fear May Come Too Late," Sewanee Review, LV (Summer, 1947), 516.

as sharing complicity in a lynching⁶ suggests that Tate may, late in life, be developing a social conscience sensitive to the rights of the Negro. Conceivably such a social conscience might prompt him to dissociate his agrarianism from his defense and elaboration of Calhoun's social thought, from his attack on abolitionism, and from his condescension toward certain aspects of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian egalitarianism--three elements in his thought which he has never, so far as I know, really repudiated in his published writings.⁷

If Tate continued to probe the white Southerners' guilt in relation to the Negro, he might eventually revise his myth of the Old South so as to present the slaveholder as a man for whom, in general, there could be no more real unity between "moral choice and material occupation"⁸ than there can be for the modern industrialist. Such revision of his thought would necessitate repudiation of certain emphatic statements not only in his early biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis but also in some essays reprinted in 1948 in his selected essays entitled On the Limits of Poetry. Several of these emphatic state-

⁶ Tate, "The Swimmers," Hudson Review, V (Winter, 1953), 471-473. The poem is briefly discussed on pp. 468-469 of this dissertation.

⁷ For evidence that Tate would have great difficulty in breaking away, even today, from his myth of the Old South, see p. 109n of this dissertation.

⁸ See Tate, "What Is a Traditional Society?" On the Limits of Poetry, pp. 302-304; Tate, "A Traditionalist Looks at Liberalism," Southern Review, I (Spring, 1936), 739-740.

ments interpreting Southern tradition contain significant factual errors--errors suggesting that Tate's study of Southern history was hardly as "careful" as Mrs. Louise Cowan (author of a dissertation on the Fugitive poets) has claimed.⁹ For Tate to revise his myth of the Old South would be a large undertaking. But only if he does so will he be free to find a sound basis upon which to criticize the combination of plutocracy and belief in a "false liberal democracy"¹⁰ which, in his opinion, was a hazard to America in the 1930's and 1940's and presumably, in his opinion, is still a danger today.

⁹ Louise Cowan, "The Fugitive Poets in Relation to the South," Shenandoah, VI (Summer, 1955), 6.

¹⁰ Tate, "To Whom Is the Poet Responsible?" Forlorn Demon, p. 26.

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